MELOR OF THE SILVER HAND

REV. DAVID BEARNE S. J.

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Melor of the Silver Hand

and Other Stories

'Such as the wholesome mothers tell their boys.'

Melor of the Silver Hand

AND OTHER STORIES OF THE

BRIGHT AGES

BY

REV. DAVID BEARNE, S.J.,

Author of "Charlie Chittywick," "Ridingdale Flower Show," "The Witch of Ridingdale," etc.

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MELOR OF THE SILVER HAND.

VERY long ago there lived in a Cornish monastery a boy named Melor. He was an orphan and his father had been a Cornish prince, reigning happily enough until his own brother, Rainald, revolted against him and put him to death. And indeed if the Bishops and clergy of those parts had not used all their influence with Rainald and implored him to spare the life of his nephew, Melor himself would have shared the fate of his father.

But although the wicked usurper permitted the son of his murdered brother to live, before sending him into one of the Cornish monasteries to be brought up, Rainald hacked off the poor child's right hand and likewise his left foot—partly, no doubt, from the motive of revenge, partly in order to make the boy incapable of bearing arms in future years.

Now in the remote days of the fifth century artificial limbs were not very skilfully constructed; yet the good monks in whose care Melor was placed, full of pity at the sight of a young and comely boy so sadly mutilated by his own uncle, set to work to contrive for him a new hand and a new foot. And as he was the son of a prince they decided that the hand ought to be made of pure silver, while the foot should be wrought in brass.

So in spite of the loss of two such valuable limbs, the boy Melor grew up happy and contented, joining in all the games of his schoolfellows, and showing himself more diligent than some of them in the abbey school, and always attentive and devout within the stalls of the minster choir. Even the wildest of those rough Cornish lads loved and respected him too much ever to laugh at his lameness, or to jeer at the noise poor Melor could not help making on the hard stone floors with his heavy brazen foot. It may be, too, that they respected the swing of that silver hand, for Melor was strong and brave, as his father had been, and had no reason to fear aught that might befall him—saving treachery. So magnanimous was the boy that on the rare occasions when a fight was forced upon him he would use only his hand of flesh. Seldom, however, did boys of his own age challenge him to such unequal combat.

But indeed there was small reason for any but the most ill-conditioned to quarrel with the princely lad who made so light of his misfortunes, and the cruel treatment of the uncle whose prisoner he actually was.

Just precisely when a strange story began to circulate among the abbey scholars no one could rightly say. But like most rumours it grew greatly by repetition, losing nothing by being whispered into one ear after another, and discussed in quiet corners of the cloister or in the intervals of games. Some boys spoke of it in a scared, awe-struck way that frightened their listeners, and forced them to regard Melor in an entirely new light. One or two of the most ignorant, and therefore the most superstitious, began to avoid the boy of the silver hand. A few who were devoured by curiosity watched him in an eager, fascinated

way which but for his absence of self-consciousness he would have found embarrassing. Not one of his companions had the courage to ask him if what they had heard was actually true.

The rumour was that the young prince was beginning to use his silver hand as though it were a living limb!

One boy had seen him catch a ball with it: another had beheld him use it to pluck the wild roses from the briars; another had caught him in the act of clasping his beer-cup in the refectory; another was ready to declare on oath that in a recent game when he took hold of the metal hand it returned his pressure and gently closed upon his own fleshy fist.

However honest and good a boy may be he can never be liked by all. Every man, every boy is sure to have his enemies and detractors. One lad who had once forced a fight upon Melor—only to be ignominiously beaten by the one hand of flesh—roundly declared that sorcery was at the bottom of this strange mystery of the moving of metal fingers, and that such a lad ought not to be harboured in a cloister school. Retailing his suspicions to a friend, a lad who also had a grudge against Melor, the pair denounced the young prince to their master, a holy monk named Jerome.

Father Jerome rebuked them severely.

"My sons," he said, "you are acting as the acolytes of Satan. Your suspicions are as silly as they are wicked, as foolish as they are unfounded. Melor's life is too pure and good, much too well-known for its virtue and sincere piety, ever to be subjected to such a calumny as this. To a boy who is as dear to the good God as Melor undoubtedly is,

everything is possible, and though I do not say that any miracle is taking place amongst us—myself, I have seen nothing of what you hint at—I should not be in the least surprised if our Lord put life and virtue into that poor lad's silver limb. What, however, I suspect is that as he grows older—his thirteenth birthday is just past—he becomes more and more dexterous in the use of his artificial hand. If men are often deceived as to the nature of the things they *think* they see, and if the expert use of any limb may at times deceive the quickest eye, it is small wonder if young and inexperienced boys like you should deceive yourselves. However, let me hear no more of such wicked suspicions, or I promise you your penance will be worth the doing. Above all things I forbid you to make any mention of this to Cerialton."

Now Cerialton was, in a certain sense, Melor's gaoler. A creature of Rainald's court, Cerialton was responsible for the safe custody of the usurper's nephew. Whenever the boys left the abbey precincts, as they frequently did, this tool of the murderer was bound to accompany and to keep a sharp eye upon his charge. Outwardly he was kind enough to the child, and indeed but for the fear he had of his master, Prince Rainald, he would gladly have shown loyalty and affection to the son of the murdered prince.

Melor himself had no sort of fear of his keeper. Indeed, the lad knew not what fear was. So whenever they went abroad he chatted as gaily to Cerialton as to any of the monks, or as to any of his companions, sharing with the man the spoils of the expeditions, fruits or flowers, nuts or berries, according to the season of the year.

Much forest land lay within a little distance of the

monastery, and the boys delighted to explore the dense and pathless woods in spring and summer, sometimes losing themselves in the dark, cool, formless aisles where only birds and beasts, trees and flowers were ever found. Yet to many of them the autumn time was especially sweet on account of the great store of nuts upon which they could not only feed at will but fill their bags and satchels with a harvest that would serve them well during the long, cold months of winter.

It happened on a lovely October day, the first of the month, as the boys swarmed hither and thither in the woodland, laughing and shouting from pure joyousness and stripping the hazel boughs of their already ripened treasure, that Cerialton, keeping a keener eye than usual on Melor, seemed extraordinarily moody and silent. Indeed some who noticed the face of the miserable man on that afternoon saw in his countenance an expression of fear and anxiety that they had never beheld before.

Melor himself was conscious of nothing but the stir and bustle of the outing, the beauty of the day, the hilarity of his companions, and the rich harvest of nuts that he and the rest were reaping. Climbing tree and bush as nimbly as any squirrel, the lad showed himself equal to the quickest of his schoolmates in seizing and stripping the heavily laden boughs. Apparently solicitous for his safety, Cerialton stood ever at the foot of the tree until his young charge had descended.

More than once the man turned pale with fear: his legs shook beneath him and he was compelled to steady himself by leaning against the trunk of the tree. He had seen, or thought he had seen, the boy clasp the bough and pick the

nuts with his silver hand as neatly and as easily as though the limb were of living flesh and blood!

Long ago he had heard the strange rumour, and only yesterday he had carried it to his master the prince. The usurper had shown both rage and terror.

"It needs but this," he had said to Cerialton, "to take away the very last support to my rule. Already you have reported to me that the boy is brave and clever, virtuous and pious, loved by the monks and by his companions. It needs but the rumour of his possession of a miraculous hand to make him worshipped by the people as a saint. Cowardly cur that you are! do you not see what your duty is in such circumstances as these? Or must I myself come to the monastery and hack the pair of you in pieces with my own two-edged sword?"

The creedless are always the credulous, and the most guilty are always the most superstitious. Cerialton was consumed with fear. His whole soul revolted against the idea of murdering in cold blood a pure and innocent child. Yet that if he did not do so his own life would be forfeit he knew but too well. If only he could deny this strange and uncanny rumour! If only he could report to his master that there was no sort of truth in the report that the silver hand was supple and prehensile!

Yet, alas for him! his own eyes now witnessed the wonder. So overwrought was he by superstitious fear that as he gazed at the boy sitting astride a bough, it seemed to him that the silver fingers were far more dexterous than those belonging to the hand of flesh and blood.

"There are too many of us here, Melor," said Cerialton as the boy jumped from the bough with a great thud of his

brass foot on the earth. "Let us go a little deeper into the forest. Down here the nut-trees are particularly well-laden. Yes, bring your sack and satchel, we may need them."

Chatting brightly to his keeper the boy plunged with him further and further into the dark interior of the woodland.

"But, Cerialton," said the boy, "it looks so very gloomy yonder. I doubt if I shall be able to see the nuts."

" 'Twill be lighter presently," the man answered shortly.

"At any rate," laughed the boy as he disentangled his metal foot from a dense growth of brambles, "the others have not been here. I doubt if any man or boy has ever come so far before. There is no sign of a pathway, is there?"

"We shall come across a pathway very soon," said Cerialton.

"I don't see any hazels here about," remarked Melor, peering through the thick autumnal foliage. "How the leaves have fallen in some places! And in others how they cling to the trees—just as we cling to life, Cerialton."

The boy was walking a little ahead of his companion, holding a briar here and a branch there that it might not be in the way of the man, whose ashy haggard face he did not look at.

"Give me your bag," the gaoler said suddenly. "No, not the sack, the book satchel."

"Really, Cerialton, I don't think we can get much further," said Melor as he took from his shoulder the satchel which hung by a strong leathern strap. "We should need an axe to force our way through this undergrowth."

"If it gets too thick I'll cut it away with my dagger," the man muttered in a low tone. He had already taken the weapon from its sheath and, unperceived by the lad, was cutting off the strap of the satchel. O but that long dagger was keener than a butcher's knife.

Suddenly Melor gave a little cry. His arms had been seized from behind and already the leathern thong was binding the hand of silver to the hand of flesh.

"Cerialton!" was all the boy could exclaim as the man seized him roughly and began to bare his throat. For one long moment the liquid eyes of the child rested upon the face of the man—a face upon which murder was written large. Then the lad shut his eyes and prayed.

"Sweet Jesus! pity and forgive me—as I forgive Cerialton and my uncle," he murmured.

And even as the words rose to Heaven the dagger fell, and a pool of blood was dyeing the yellow leaves with a lurid crimson.

A certain courage came back to the murderer now that his victim lay stiff and stark at his feet. The afternoon had waned: twilight had fallen and the woodland was very still.

Cerialton told himself that he had a duty to perform. He must lose no time in giving his master some positive proof of Melor's death. To carry the entire body to court was impossible: he would cut off the head and bear it with all speed through the gathering darkness of the autumnal day straight to the feet of Rainald. As for the body, what better tomb could it have than this untrodden spot of forest land? Soon would the showers of falling leaves

cover it with a pall of crimson and russet and hide it for ever from the face of man.

So away sped Cerialton upon his horrible mission, trying in vain to get comfort from the thought that however great was the crime he had committed he had at least done his duty to a tyrant master. Away he ran with his dreadful, if sacred, burden, scarce noticing that he was plunging deeper and deeper into the forest—until he found himself confronted with a darkness so pitchy and a growth of brambles so dense that he was fain to retrace his steps.

Even when after a protracted journey through the forest he found himself on the highway, the road he had to traverse was long and difficult. Though he dreaded the thought of meeting any human being, the darkness and the solitude weighed upon him heavily. An almost unbearable thirst afflicted him; yet even when at long intervals he found himself near a dwelling-house he dared not venture to beg a cup of water. Through the darkness of a starless and a moonless night the soft, pleading eyes of Melor seemed to look into his own.

O to be rid of the terrible burden that he carried in the bag upon his shoulder! O to find, what he knew could not be found in the region he was traversing, a priest to shrive him from his awful sin! Gladly, now that he came to consider the matter, most gladly would he have given his own life if by so doing he could have saved that of this innocent and affectionate boy.

To Cerialton, as he made his unsteady way through the darkness, it seemed as though one of the tortures of hell was already afflicting him. His thirst was intolerable. Almost maddened by his intense longing for drink he cried

out: "Wretch that I am! I shall die by the roadside for want of a drop of water." To his intense astonishment a voice seemed to answer him out of the darkness—nay, to be speaking almost in his very ear: "Cerialton, strike the ground near you, and you will find a spring."

In an agony of fear he dropped the bag with its sad burden to the earth. Whatever the fact may have been, to him the voice was the clear, sweet treble of Melor, whose living tones had so often and so lately fallen upon his ear. Yet, startled as he was, so terrible was the agony of his thirst that he began to grope about in the darkness and to strike the ground with his staff. And behold! on his right hand ran a stream of pure water—of which he made haste to drink.

It was nearly midnight when Cerialton reached the prince's palace and demanded immediate audience with his master.

Rainald had retired to rest but was lying awake, plotting and planning how best to make secure the throne to which he had no right. No sooner did he hear of Cerialton's arrival than he ordered him to be admitted.

"Sire," began the murderer, placing his bag upon the floor, "the deed is done. Behold the head of Melor!"

Eagerly did the usurper stretch out his hands to take the yet bloody relic of his brother's son. Fixedly did he look upon the beautiful face of the boy who, however violent his end, had died in the grace of God and at peace with all men.

"It is enough!" exclaimed the prince at length. "Take it out of my sight. Give to it and to its trunk the burial of a prince. I am not well. Send my servants to me."

Even as he had gazed at the still features of the murdered child he had sickened and fallen into a mortal complaint.

Three days afterwards Rainald appeared before the Judge of the living and the dead.

Cerialton did not linger at court. On the very morning after his arrival he set out early for the forest in which lay the body of Melor, carrying with him the severed head, and determined in his bitter sorrow and penitence that he would not rest until the young prince had received the obsequies of a Christian.

Morning was somewhat advanced when he plunged into the woodland and began his sorrowful search for the headless corpse. Deeper and deeper he made his way until the shadow of thickly planted trees led him into the dark gloom of the thicket in which he had committed his terrible crime.

Suddenly he stopped—blinded and bewildered. There could be no doubt that he was approaching the scene of the crime, and yet—just at the point where yesterday the shadows had been so dense that even the strong afternoon sunlight could not pierce them, a brilliant white light bathed the little hollow in its beauty.

Trembling with fear, he pushed his way through thorns and brambles, thinking at every step of the terrible death march he had let the unsuspecting boy not many hours before. As he advanced the light increased. White indeed was the lovely radiance, yet tinged and shot with gold.

Pressing on in his eagerness to see if possible the source of this wonderful illumination, his first thought was that the monks of the abbey had found the body and were preparing to sing its dirge in the forest. Or, he asked

himself, were they making ready to bury the poor innocent in the very place where they had found him lying? For the light seemed now to be that of many waxen torches.

Tapers indeed there were, lighted tapers beyond counting. But who were the white-clad bearers of these innumerable candles? Surely they were not the dead boy's schoolfellows! Young indeed they seemed to be, but how utterly unlike the rough, shock-headed Cornish lads of the monastery school. Boys they undoubtedly were, but surely such radiant spiritual countenances as these were never worn by mortal children! Was it possible that Heaven had sent its bodyguard of youthful angels to watch the headless trunk of Rainald's victim?

A vision of blinding beauty in very truth it was—too dazzling for the unhappy wretch who vainly endeavored to reach the outer ring of these celestial watchers. With a great cry for mercy Cerialton flung himself face-forward upon the earth, and lay there confessing his sin and imploring the forgiveness of Heaven.

Whether he had swooned or only slept he knew not. Somebody was bending over him, and the kind voice of Father Jerome was in his ear. Slowly raising himself to a kneeling posture, he exclaimed, "For the love of God, Father, hear the confession of a sinner whose guilt is greater than he can bear!"

Even while he made his confession he was conscious of the tramp of many feet in the immediate neigborhood. Long before he had finished, the chant of the *Miserere* assured him that the monks and boys were already bearing the body of Melor to the abbey. Sorrowfully yet soothingly the wail was borne back to him on the noonday air,

the deep voices of the monks alternating with the piercing treble of the lads, and turning the dim woodland into a temple of prayer and supplication. Away in the distance the lights of many funeral torches glimmered through the trees, and when the *Miserere* ceased, a brighter, gladder chant rose jubilantly enough to Heaven, the canticle of praise and thanksgiving that is used at the obsequies of innocent little ones—*Benedicite, omnia opera Domini, Domino: laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula.*

It need not surprise us that the voice of the people canonized the poor child whose life had been pure and holy, and whose death had been so cruelly sad. Wonderful things were spoken of and believed by the simple Cornish folk of those remote times, and to this day it is told how all through the dark October night that followed upon his murder, the dark wood was lit up with a heavenly light, and the forms of angel children were seen kneeling around the headless body and hovering over the spot that was soaked with its life-blood.

Many years afterwards some, if not all, of Melor's relics were carried to the little town of Amesbury in Wiltshire, where a Benedictine nunnery was founded by Elfrida, the widow of Edgar, who thus tried to make some expiation for the assassination of her own son at Corfe Castle. The pre-Reformation church in this old-world town still retains its ancient dedication to Our Lady and St. Melor—or Melorius, as it is sometimes written.

The unhappy Cerialton gave himself up entirely to penance, leading the austere life of a hermit and never ceasing to implore the mercy of God and the intercession of the holy boy whose life he had so ruthlessly taken.

THE BROTHER OF THE APPLES.

I.

THE wistful looks of the children as they passed the fruit-filled orchard troubled him. The longing looks of them—the half-averted gaze of the sorely-tempted—the shamefacedness of the scrupulous among them, who feared they had already broken the tenth commandment: all this disturbed the soul of the old Gardener-Brother.

In truth, a good man this Brother Godfrey and an arboriculturist of repute, great in grafting and pruning, wonderful in his knowledge of the ways of trees. Doubtless the orchards of Glastonbury bore marvellous fruit; certainly the laden boughs of Malmesbury made pictures (as well as pies) for the pilgrim; the apples of Croyland had name and fame throughout the land; the pears cultivated by the good Cistercians of Wardon,[1] and the huge Wardon-pies made by these non-meat-eating monks, were in renown. But for an

[1] "The horticultural skill of the Cistercian monks (the greatest of mediæval gardeners) of Wardon in Bedfordshire, a foundation dating from the 12th cent., produced at some early but uncertain time, a baking variety of the pear. It bore, and still bears, the name of the abbey; it figured on its armorial escutcheon (*ar*, 3 Wardon pears, *or*, two and one) and supplied the contents of those Wardon-pies so often named in old descriptions of feasts, and which so many of our historical novelists have represented as huge pasties of venison and other meats suited to the digestive capacities of gigantic *wardens* of feudal days. It is time, in justice to those venerable gardeners, that this error should be exploded. Their application to horticultural pursuits, even up to the Dissolution, is honorably attested by a survey of their monastery, made after that event."—Volema pira (Wardon pear) is mentioned in Alex. Neckham's *De Laudibus Sapientiæ*—The Clown in *Winter's Tale* says: "I must have saffron to color the warden-pies."

orchard that was verily a forest of fruit and a natural cloister of incomparable coolness, I sing the praises of that of which Brother Godfrey was the guardian.

It was not an apple-garth of yesterday. Planted when were built the great cloisters that, on one side at least, were its boundary, it contained many a tree past bearing, many a bough that the coming winds of winter would bring to earth, many a gnarled and twisted trunk upon which only the mistletoe flourished, many a moss-grown hollow bole that the woodmen would fain have removed.

But what booted it, asked Brother Godfrey, that a few useless trees should stand here and there among the laden boughs that filled the croft from end to end? Had they not once yielded fruit to the eater? Yea, and to the thirsting traveller the cool and sparkling cider.

No mere hive of drones was this big Benedictine abbey in the sweet west country—once a wilderness of weeds and a tangle of thorns, overrun by the wolf and the wild boar. Coming to it when he was himself a young boy, Brother Godfrey had found it much as it was to-day: a little more perfect in detail now, perhaps, somewhat larger in area, and its walls filled with an ever-growing community. He had begun his life as a garden-boy, and, coming in the autumn-time, in this month of rich September, the first task appointed him had been the stripping of some of these very boughs.

Fifty years ago! yet how well he remembered it. Nay, the recollection made him smile; and when the good lay-brother smiled he looked the man he was—a happy and a holy monk. Yet, holy man as he was, he smiled at the recollection of a fault: at nothing less than his first breach of the Rule. For unthinkingly as he plucked the rosy fruit

from the boughs, he had lifted an apple to his mouth—had tasted it and found it honey-sweet and good—had eaten it with relish and a clear conscience. The Brothers with him must have seen the deed; but, honest men! they had made no sign either of knowledge or of disapproval.

Not many days after, it fell out that the novice-master reached his instruction on that portion of the Rule which forbids promiscuous eating. Then to the seeming enormity of his fault were the eyes of the boy-novice suddenly opened. He trembled as he sat upon his bench of stone, listening to the grave voice of the novice-master. Would it cost him the habit to which he so longingly aspired? Would he be shut up in the abbey prison for a space, like the truant scholar he had seen conducted thither that very morning with the gyves upon his feet? Or would he be publicly flogged and sent back to his sorrow-stricken parents?

Fearfully and brokenly, and as one expecting no mercy, the boy sought his novice-master and made known his fault. Surely in all his life he had not wept so long or so bitterly as on that doleful day!

And, behold, the young and stern Father Michael listened sympathetically, and did not even scold him. Like the dear holy Father he ever was, he dried the penitent's tears and gave him the consolation of a saintly instructor: comforted and consoled him, even while he explained the rule which forbade the eating out of meal-times, and while he gave him a trifling penance for his fault. Yes, such a little penance! "You will find, my son, that there will be apples on the refectory table to-day and, through the bounty of God, for many days and weeks. To-day, my child, you may abstain from fruit."

Not for that day only, but for several days did Brother Godfrey punish himself: but O how good the apples tasted afterwards!

To-day he laughed at the recollection: yet the laughter quickly left his face, and he sighed deeply. The thought of the wistful looks of the village laddies as they passed the orchard-gate, and the remembrance of something that Father Ambrose had told him the day before, made Brother Godfrey sad.

For the zealous Father Ambrose had the spiritual care of the big hamlet outside the abbey gates—"the thorpe that lay so close, and almost plaster'd like a martin's nest to those old walls"—the village that, like so many proud English cities, would never have existed but for the coming of the monks. It was Father Ambrose indeed who had to mingle in that little outside world, and, like the monk of Arthur's time,

> Knowing every honest face of theirs
> As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
> And every homely secret in their hearts,
> Delight himself with gossip and old wives,
> And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,
> And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
> That have no meaning half a league away:
> Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
> Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,
> Rejoice, small man, in this small world of his,
> Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—

and, be it added, in their apples.

For the summer had been less sunny than usual, and as the village lay at the abbey entrance low down in the valley, its little apple-garths had not caught the heat that struck the monastery orchard on the slope of the hill, and so this year many of their trees were all but fruitless.

The thought of this troubled Brother Godfrey; nay, it hurt him and haunted him. It followed him to refectory and dormitory and church. It pained him most when he heard the chorus of high eager voices commenting upon his own harvest of apples. It came back whenever he heard the beat of wooden shoes on the stone floor of the cloister. That night before the statue of Our Lady of Pity he spoke about the matter long and lovingly to the Holy Child and His Blessed Mother.

II.

The Sub-Prior was a good man with a dread of children and no taste for apples. He was a man indeed with anything but a healthy appetite for food of any sort, and his many infirmities were a much greater trial to himself than to those with whom he had to do. An able and a holy man was Father Thomas, but one who would never be elected to a higher post than that of Sub-Prior. He was in truth rather a hard man and difficult to deal with.

Nevertheless he was Brother Godfrey's immediate Superior at the time, and when the simple man spoke to him of the abundance of apples, and the many children a good God had sent into the world to eat them, Father Thomas rebuked him roundly, bade him attend to the duties of his office and leave the children to those who had charge of them.

Now because of the cider that was made in the abbey, the Cellarer, always an important official, had ever to be consulted in regard to the disposition of apples, and it was he who arranged with Brother Godfrey and the Cook as to

the winter store of this useful fruit. With the Cellarer then did the old lay-brother put in his plea for the children, hoping that this good Father would try to obtain the consent of the Prior.

But the Cellarer took alarm from the beginning.

"With a big community like ours, Brother, we *can't* have too many apples. It's simply impossible. There is hardly a barrel of cider left from last year. And you're forgetting the number of new novices we have received since last Christmas—all young, too—most of them growing boys—all apple-eaters, in truth. We must feed our own first. But I'll think about it. Yes," said the Cellarer jingling his keys, "I'll certainly think about it, I will indeed, Brother."

Then did Brother Godfrey turn him to the Father Prior. It was an unfortunate moment. The good Prior was sorely troubled with a debt that was overdue—a debt that could not have existed but for the failure of last year's wheat-harvest.

"You and your children!" he ejaculated, but not ill-naturedly. "They want bread more than apples, some of them. And when the snow comes, where will they get it save at the abbey here? And where shall we get it if the winter is long and hard?"

The Prior went on his way deep in thought, troubled a little by the duties of his office, troubled much by the fear of debt; but more than trustful in the Providence that for so many centuries had blessed this *Domus Dei.*

Brother Godfrey sighed. He had done his best for the children he loved, and he had failed. They must go sadly and appleless. But he, Brother Godfrey, must get him to the orchard and pick up the windfalls of the night.

Yes, he needed his biggest basket this morning. All during the past long night the wind had roared and raved, until at Matin-time it all but drowned the voices of the chanting monks. But at Prime it had suddenly subsided, and now the sun shone warmly on the sweet September world, drying the rain-drops that lay upon the crimson and yellow apples like tears upon the cheeks of children.

His biggest basket! Yes, but all his baskets would be needed to-day. What a rain of ruddy and golden fruit! The grass of the orchard seemed covered with the ripe and juicy apples. Speedily did Brother Godfrey fill his wicker hamper: less speedily did he bear it to the abbey kitchen.

There the Brother saw a sight that gave him pause. How could he have forgotten so great a vigil! To-morrow—was it not the feast of St. Michael? Of a truth he had not thought of it until he saw the young novices, a little crowd of them, sitting in the outer kitchens plucking the Michaelmas geese. Beautiful birds they were, hatched and reared on the abbey farm—big and soft and plump, and with feathers white as snow! And there stood a knot of choir-monks from the Scriptorium keenly examining the quality of the quills—carefully laying them aside and tying them in bundles.

The sight made Brother Godfrey very glad. He would pray to St. Wulstan that neither the thought nor the smell of roast goose might visit him within the minster walls. "For," thought the simple old man, "I might never be able to take the resolution of that holy Bishop, and forswear the flesh of this bonny bird for ever."

But the Brother was thinking more of other things than of roast goose.

The feast of St. Michael was one of the greatest of the year in this house of strict observance of days of fasting and abstinence, as well as of feasts. For it was ruled by Abbot Michael, and was it not that holy man's feast-day?

After some necessary conversation with the cook, whose need of apples was this morning more pressing than ever, Brother Godfrey went back to the orchard, accompanied by two young novices with their baskets. They walked in silence, but the boys could not but see that the old man smiled as he walked. A delightful thought had entered his mind, and as he passed a certain apple-tree he stopped and looked upon it with growing pleasure.

Quickly the sturdy boy-novices filled their baskets and returned to the kitchen. Then Brother Godfrey, for all his sixty-two years, got a big ladder and reared it against one particular tree. It was the choicest in the orchard. In the Brother's mind, and in his speech, it was ever "the Abbot's tree." It was old and gnarled and strangely twisted: it bore little fruit, but that little was the most honeyed in the entire garth. Year by year on this day it had been Brother Godfrey's privilege to bear a dish of apples to the Abbot's cell; year by year the gardener had picked the russet-coated sweetlings for the Michaelmas banquet.

III.

Now the Abbot Michael was very old, and because of his great age—ninety-three years or more—the rule of the community devolved largely upon the Father Prior. Seldom indeed was the holy man seen saving at the altar and in choir, and though his children loved him well and he

ever held himself accessible to them, the Infirmarian in whose charge he was did not encourage many visits to the Abbot's cell.

But on his feast-day, after the Solemn Mass at nine o'clock, it was known that he would expect to see his subjects, or rather their representatives, and to receive their congratulations. Happy were the monks of the Scriptorium who had completed a great Psalter written in black and red and wonderfully illuminated, for presentation to their Father on this particular day. But equally happy was Brother Godfrey, who had asked and obtained leave to carry a silver dish of apples to his old novice-master and his lifelong friend.

Old in years was Abbot Michael, but young in heart—youthful with the youthfulness of the saints, joyous with the joyousness of the true ascetic. He received Brother Godfrey with affectionate delight.

"Nay, my son, you shall not remain upon your knees," he said, pointing to a stool that stood by his chair. "Sit here, my child, and let us talk for a while of past days. You are one of the last of my own novices, are you not, Brother? Yes, one of the last. You make me feel very ancient, for you yourself are beginning to look old. Yet I remember your coming so well—a red-cheeked, curly-headed little lad with such a shy smile and such an innocent look. Nay, Brother, and the look did not belie you."

The venerable Abbot took the lay-Brother's rough hand in his own thin palm, and pressed it affectionately.

"And you bring me apples," the Abbot went on: "you bring me the fruits of your own labor. The same good apples too that you have brought me year by year: it is wonderful! This can scarcely happen again, dear Brother.

The days of my years are almost fulfilled: I cannot expect to keep another Michaelmas on earth. My son, I would have you ask a boon of me. Never yet have you permitted your Father to bestow ought upon you but his blessing: that indeed you shall have, but I would entreat you to ask me some favor, some——"

It was at this point that Brother Godfrey surprised both the Abbot and himself. The simple man marvelled at the rush of words that suddenly flowed from his lips. He did not know that a warm heart makes for eloquence, and that a great opportunity loosens the strings of speech. But he did wonder, both then and afterwards, at his own courageous fluency.

Not forgetting to tell the Abbot of his talk with the Sub-Prior, with the Cellarer, and with the Prior, Brother Godfrey earnestly and all but tearfully preferred his request. He asked a privilege for himself and for all future custodians of the orchard. Throwing himself again on his knees, he begged that a certain measure of apples might be reserved for the children of the village—*for ever.*

"Call the Prior, the Sub-Prior, and the Cellarer," the Abbot said with a smile: "and ask them to be provided with parchment and ink and pens."

And so it fell about that on this feast of St. Michael the "Brother of the Apples" received a document granting him and his successors "plenary power to bestow upon all and sundry of the children of the thorpe, but especially upon the progeny of the very poor, abundant and unstinted measure of ripe apples for ever."[1]

[1] We know well the name of the Monster who put into his own capacious pockets the pious gifts left to the living and the dead—for ever. Into those same swollen pockets went the children's apples.

GOOD KING WENCESLAUS.

ONE of the greatest misfortunes that can happen to any child is to have a depraved and unbelieving mother. Young Wenceslaus, the son of the Ruler of Bohemia, and his brother Boleslas, had for mother a cruel and impious pagan. Happily for the boys, their father was a true Christian, the son of the first Catholic Duke of Bohemia, whose wife is known in history as the Blessed Ludmilla. After the death of her husband this holy princess lived at Prague, and, to her great joy, her grandson Wenceslaus was placed by his father in her wise and loving care. Her chaplain became the boy's tutor, and under the guidance of this singularly holy and prudent man Wenceslaus soon began to give signs of solid piety and lasting goodness. After some years he was sent to College at Budweis, a place more than sixty miles from Prague, and there he made progress both in learning and in virtue, being, it is said, notably careful in shunning the things that make for sin.

When his father died, Wenceslaus was still young, and his pagan mother determined to govern Bohemia in his stead. Immediately she began to make war upon the Catholic religion. She ordered every church to be closed, stopped the exercise of all Christian rites, and, imitating the conduct

of Julian the Apostate (whose impiety is at this time being emulated by the French Government), forbade priests to give any instruction to the young. Not content with this, she repealed all the laws made by her husband and his father in favor of the Christians, and in all the towns of Bohemia replaced the Catholic magistrates by her own followers.

Promising him all the help in her power, the grandmother of Wenceslaus, Blessed Ludmilla, implored the boy to check these outrages by taking his lawful place as the ruler of Bohemia. Greatly to the delight of the people he obeyed, and his wretched mother was deposed. His generosity is shown by the fact that in order to avoid disputes he divided the country between himself and his younger brother.

Sad to say, this younger brother, Boleslas, was perverted by his wicked mother, who was enraged at her deposition and determined to be revenged upon both Wenceslaus and his grandmother.

Meanwhile, Wenceslaus chose for his advisers the most upright and prudent ministers in his dominions, and did all in his power to establish and preserve peace. Like so many other saintly princes, he gives the lie to those enemies of Jesus Christ who try to maintain that a pious king cannot be a good ruler. Religion is for all men, whether their character be strong or weak, and it is difficult to say if the masterly and self-reliant, or the timid and incapable have more need of Divine help. In Wenceslaus there was no suspicion of weakness. His piety was profound. He gave his days to business, and his nights to prayer. His devotion to the Adorable Sacrament was so remarkable that with his own hands he sowed the corn for the altar-bread, while he gathered the grapes and made the wine used in the Holy

Sacrifice.[1] He usually left his bed at midnight, going to the churches to pray even when snow lay on the ground; and if the church doors were shut he was content to kneel in the porch. His daily life was filled with works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual. Wherever there was want or trouble or distress, there the King appeared. Orphans and widows, the sick, the dying, prisoners in their cells—all were visited and relieved by him. "He ruled his kingdom by his virtues, rather than by force," says the Breviary, and it was the greatest possible grief to him when he was compelled to pass sentence of death upon the guilty. In the dead of night he would go to the prisons and console those who were shut up, giving them food and money as well as advice and comforting words. It is said that walking barefoot through snow and ice his bleeding footprints gave out heat. In some parts of England this legend, prettily versified by the late Dr. Neale, is well known as a Christmas carol:

Good King Wenceslaus looked out on the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even:
Brightly shone the moon that night, though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight gath'ring winter fuel.

[1] The following account of the preparation of the bread and wine for the altar at Cluny is an instance of the care taken in this matter in the Ages of Faith: "There were numberless beautiful rites of benediction observed, as that of the ripe grapes, which were blessed on the altar during Mass, on the 6th of August, and afterwards distributed in the refectory; of new beans, and of the freshly-pressed juice of the grape. The ceremonies observed in making the altar-breads were also most worthy of note. The grains of wheat were chosen one by one, were carefully washed and put aside in a sack, which was carried by one known to be pure in life and conversation to the mill. Then they were ground and sifted, he who performed this duty being clothed in alb and amice. Two priests and deacons clothed in like manner prepared the breads, and a lay-brother, having gloves on his hands, held the irons in which they were baked. The very wood of the fire was chosen of the best and driest. And whilst these processes were being gone through the brethren engaged ceased not to sing psalms, or sometimes recited our Lady's Office."

The King asks his page who the poor man is and where he lives; finding that his dwelling is "a good league hence underneath the mountain," Wenceslaus exclaims—

"Bring me flesh and bring me wine, bring me pine-logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine when we bear them thither:"
Page and monarch forth they went, forth they went together,
Through the rude wind's wild lament and the bitter weather.

But in the darkness and the cold the boy's heart fails him: whereupon the good King says—

"Mark my footsteeps, my good page, tread thou in them boldly:
Thou shalt find the winter's rage freeze thy blood less coldly."

Following in his master's steps, the boy finds that

Heat was in the very sod which the Saint had printed.

The King's revengeful mother was determined that her son should have no peace. The grandmother of Wenceslaus found that her daughter-in-law was plotting to take her life. In no way disturbed, the holy old woman distributed her goods among her servants and the poor, made her confession and prepared herself for death. Hired assassins found her prostrate in prayer before the altar of her chapel and strangled her with her own veil.

Not satisfied with this abominable crime, the King's mother invited Radislas, Prince of Gurima, to invade her son's territory. Anxious to maintain the peace of his country, Wenceslaus sent a message to Radislas asking what offense he had given him and suggesting terms of reconciliation. Radislas treated the message with contempt and answered that the entire surrender of Bohemia was his only condition of peace.

Physical courage is a great gift: moral courage is a far

greater one. Wenceslaus had both. He immediately marched against the enemy of his country. When the two armies met, the Saint asked for speech with Radislas—who was soon to be convinced that if sometimes a bad man may be a hero—of a sort, a man of God is doubly and trebly a hero. Greatly to his surprise, Radislas found himself challenged to single combat. "Why should we shed the blood of our followers?" Wenceslaus asked: "let the battle be between us, the leaders." Radislas could not refuse to accept such a challenge—a very different matter, be it remembered, to a duel. Still despising his pious antagonist, the invader assured himself of an easy victory.

Armed with only a short sword, the brave Wenceslaus met his country's foe. The fight was brief enough. Failing to fling his javelin, to the astonishment of his men, Radislas threw down his weapons and fell upon his knees. He had not struck a single blow. Without a struggle, the invading King yielded to the saintly and courageous Wenceslaus.

The good King's troubles did not cease with his victory over Radislas. Wenceslaus had now to turn his attention to his own country. Some of his nobles were oppressors of the poor, and this with other disorders the King checked with necessary severity. His action did not make him popular with these unworthy men, and when the unnatural mother of Wenceslaus began to plot against her son's life they readily came to her aid and that of the younger son, the pagan Boleslas.

A child had been born to Boleslas, and a pressing invitation was sent to Wenceslaus to be present at the celebration of so important an event. Suspecting nothing, Wenceslaus

accepted. It was the 28th of September in the year 938. The entertainment was on a magnificent scale, but, true to his usual habits, when midnight came Wenceslaus went to the church. Urged by his mother, Boleslas and some attendants followed him. The holy King received many wounds from the men-at-arms, but it was his own brother who, in the end, ran him through the body with a lance. The enemies of God and religion triumphed, as they often do *for a time.*

To avenge the murder of Wenceslaus, the Emperor Otho I. subjugated Bohemia and forced Boleslas to submit. Soon after the assassination of her son, his mother lost her life: one account seems to suggest that she perished in an earthquake. Terrified by his mother's fate and the many miracles worked at his brother's tomb, Boleslas caused the Saint's body to be translated to the Church of St. Vitus at Prague, the church built by Wenceslaus himself for the reception of the body of his saintly grandmother.

It is pleasant to record that the son and successor of Boleslas became not only one of the greatest rulers of the period, but a faithful follower in the footsteps of his uncle, St. Wenceslaus.

THE KING OF ALMS.

I.

INTO the very heart of this prison on the banks of the Seine the April sunshine had forced its way. Even in Paris, Paris of the fourteenth century, the influence of Spring was making itself felt: yet brighter than the April sunlight, more joyous than the air of Spring, was the gladsomeness that filled the hearts of many of the poor prisoners as they realized the near approach of Easter.

To some, indeed, the glorious feast brought hope of liberty, as well as of spiritual consolation. It was certain that the King of Alms, as he was called, would pay his customary visit,[1] and that in honor of the great festival two of their number would be unconditionally released; though some knew but too well that for them there was no hope of pardon—except from the good God. Yet in the ages of Faith even to the hopeless Holy Church brought her consolations, and hard as was the condition of the hundred and thirty prisoners, there was not one who might not, if he would, be the happier for the coming of Easter.

It was the morning of Holy Saturday, and in the chapel of the prison the Church's offices were over. A number of Franciscan friars were already hearing the confessions of

[1] In some cities two prisoners were always released at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

the prisoners. Walking slowly through the great vaulted wards where young and old alike were confined, several of the good Fathers were engaged in comforting the sorrowful, in gently rebuking the obstinate, and in preparing the ignorant for their Easter reception of the sacraments.

"Ah, my Father," a poor man was saying to Père Antoine, "do plead with the King of Alms for me. My case is such a sad one. I have a wife, and my seven children are all young, and I know they are starving. And I am not guilty of crime. It is only for not paying the King's taxes I am here."

The good friar smiled sadly as he said:

"My poor fellow, I pity you from my heart. But what can I do? So many of you, and only two to be released! And you know the King of Alms nearly always chooses the youngest and the oldest."

"But not always, my Father."

"God help you and bless you," said the friar turning away to hide his tears. "Be sure I will do for you whatever is possible."

Very slow was the good priest's passage through the ward. Men held and kissed his habit as he moved. Half a dozen would speak to him at once, all bent upon seeking his influence, all hoping against hope that they would be the favored ones of the coming King of Alms.

Now and again he would pause and make a signal for silence. Then he would speak to the crowd in a few tender words, begging them not to forget that on the morrow One greater than the King of Alms, surpassingly greater even than the King against whose peace they had offended, was coming to them in His Sacrament of Love.

His heart ached as he passed on, noticing that always on the fringe of the crowd were a number of young boys, all eager to attract his attention, all anxious to win his favor and his influence with the King of Alms.

"My children," he called to them at length, "I will speak to you separately. Go and await me at the upper end of the ward, where it is quieter."

With a great shout of joy they rushed away in a body, some thirty or forty lads most of them in their very early teens, few of them without a fetter or shackle of some sort.

If the men had spoken eloquently the boys were not less disposed to plead their own cause, and when Father Antoine approached them their vociferousness almost stunned him. His raised hand silenced them.

Very gently and touchingly he spoke, telling them how grieved he was that he could not release them all.

"It is so perfectly natural, my poor children," he went on, "that you should long to be free. And for this I do not blame you in the least. Yet, my dear ones, for some of you it is almost better that you should remain here for a time. Some of you have no homes, and if I could obtain your release you would not be willing to go to an orphanage or to a hospital."

One half of them were in rags and showed every possible sign of poverty and neglect. Of the rest, some were young apprentice lads, well-clad and healthy-looking, imprisoned for unruliness and various forms of misconduct. A few were sons of citizens, undergoing punishment for different breaches of the law—small thefts, wilful damage, stone-throwing, and riotous conduct in the streets at carnival time. One or two appeared to be of better quality still,

and, judging by their dress, might have been the sons of gentlemen of rank, or pages in the service of some rich noble. Not one of them could have reached the age of fifteen: several of them were under twelve.

As the Father looked over the big group of young faces, some sleek and rosy, some pale and sunken, nearly all eager and anxious, his eye fell upon a well-grown but young-looking lad in the background who seemed to be taking little or no interest in what was going on. While the rest pushed and jostled one another and tried to get to the front, this boy remained quite still, his eyes cast down and his hands folded in front of him. He was clad in a rich suit of dark red velvet laced with gold, and his long black hair framed a face that was distinguished as much for its regular features as for the pallor of its complexion. A sudden lurch on the part of the crowd left this boy standing alone, and the Father then saw that not only was the richly-clad lad wearing fetters on both legs but that he alone of all the youngsters had manacles on his wrists.

But time was pressing and the friar could not linger.

"My children, how many of you have been to confession?" he inquired as he turned to leave the ward. There was a quick response from every member of the crowd—except one. All had been to confession, or were then going, saving the boy with irons on his hands. At any rate, he made no sign.

Passing out of the great vaulted room into the corridor that led to the chapel, the priest met the head gaoler.

"That dark-haired boy in red," began the friar as the man knelt for his blessing, "the one who looks like a page, and who is more strongly fettered than the others—what has he done?"

The gaoler smiled as he said: "Well, holy Father, I don't think he's done much more than any other lad would have done in the same circumstances. He is one of the pages of the Count de Leville, and was in attendance upon his son, the young Count, who, if I may whisper it, is the spoiled pet of a silly mother. The young lord threw a silver dish at this boy—who immediately threw it back again. The petted lad was not hurt, but the lady mother screamed and had this unfortunate page arrested. Unhappily for him, the Count is away at the wars. The lad had no one to speak for him, and the judge, who is related to my lady, sentenced him to a year's imprisonment."

"Has he been violent since he was brought here?"

"Not at all, Father—until yesterday. Under great provocation, no doubt, he knocked a lad down and was brought to me for a whipping—for which however I substituted a day in hand-irons. It is unfortunate for him, poor lad, since Monseigneur the Governor was going to recommend him to the King of Alms as one of the two to be released on Monday."

"And you think he has forfeited his chance?"

"My Father, I am not sure of that. It is very probable."

"Does the boy know that he was one of the two favoured ones?"

"No, no, my Father. That is our secret. Beside the Governor, only your Reverence and I know of it."

"Your secret is safe with me," said the friar. "What troubles me is that he has not been, and does not seem likely to go, to the sacraments."

"Ah, poor child! He is dejected, perhaps. You have not spoken with him privately, Father? But how could

you in the midst of such a crowd! Can your Reverence spare five minutes?"

"I ought now to be in the confessional; but certainly I will speak to him if you can bring him here."

Side by side, up and down the long cloister-like corridor, walked the friar and the boy—whose handcuffs had been taken off, though his leg-irons made sad music as he moved.

"But, my child," the priest was saying, "it is better to be freed from the prison of the soul than from that which only confines the body."

"My Father, for me it is of no use. It seems only to make me worse," said the boy. "When I made my First Communion last Noel, I thought, 'now I shall be really good.' Yet before the Epiphany I was in prison. This week I had been thinking about my confession; yet only yesterday—and Good Friday too—I got into a big rage and struck a boy. You see, Father, for me at least it is no good."

"What are the Sacraments for, my son?"

"To bring one the grace of God."

"And what is it that at this moment your soul needs most?"

The boy was silent.

"Your greatest need, my child, is the very help that you seem afraid to seek. Perhaps you heard that some holy person once said that one Communion is enough to make a saint. You made your Communion, and afterwards you discovered that you were not a saint. How old are you?"

"On the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul I shall be thirteen."

"Ah, well, my poor child, older people than you have made similar mistakes. But now, I want you to see what a big mistake it is. It is like refusing food because you are hungry, or taking off your doublet because you are cold. Nay, if you think of it, it is much more foolish than either of these things would be. It is turning your back upon your best friend; it is running away from the tender and merciful God who loves you. For whom do you think our Blessed Lord instituted Confession and Communion—for saints or for sinners?"

The lad looked up, but hesitated in his reply.

"To whom did He first give Holy Communion?" asked the friar.

"To the apostles, my Father."

"Yes. And—at that time—were they saints, do you think? What did they do on the very day after their First Communion—the first Good Friday?"

"They ran away from Him."

"And is that what the saints do?"

"O no, my Father."

"Is it what you are going to do, my child?"

A little sob was the only reply.

"Remember, my son, that our one hope of salvation lies through a good use of the sacraments. If we refuse them we are lost. Whatever the mercy of God may do for those who cannot approach them, or for those who have never heard of them, He will do nothing for us if we neglect the means of grace that He Himself has provided for us.

"Whatever may happen to you, however frequently you may fall—nay even if, which God forbid, you fell into grievous sin on the very day of Communion, go back to

confession, go again to Communion. This is how weak men overcome the snares of the wicked one. This is how sinners become saints. Sometimes it is only after many humble confessions and devout Communions that the hasty and the passionate become patient and gentle. In order to overcome yourself, my child, you have only to persevere—*in spite of failure.*"

II.

For the remainder of that Holy Saturday and during the glorious Day that followed it, prison scarcely seemed to be a place of punishment. Mindful of that much-needed corporal work of mercy many of the faithful had visited the imprisoned, bestowing abundant alms in money, in food and in clothes. Every prisoner, not a notorious criminal, was relieved of his irons. Fresh straw for bedding was supplied to all. Spring flowers made their way into the gloomy vaults. Lutes were tuned and a small band of imprisoned minstrels were permitted to go from ward to ward singing Paschal canticles. The bells of the Paris churches pealed out gloriously, adding their festive message to the general jubilation.

Father Antoine wept for joy as he assisted at the general Communion. Only one or two poor obstinate wretches had refused the sacraments; but it is certain that Pierre de Gascon, the whilom page of the Count de Leville, was not among them.

Passing down the great vault in which Pierre and the rest were confined, the friar found him playing an after-dinner game with two or three 'prentice lads. The moment

he caught sight of Father Antoine he ran to his side and reverently kissed his beads.

"Why," smiled the priest, "you are an entirely different child. I scarcely recognize you, my son. You look quite gay."

"My Father, I am very happy," said the boy gently. "Never again will I run away from the good God."

"Then, my child, you need fear nothing. Strengthen that resolution as much as ever you can."

But the lad's look of gladness was so marked that the friar began to wonder if the Governor had already told the young prisoner of his possible release.

"Are you thinking of to-morrow, Pierre? and of the King of Alms?"

The lad laughed gaily as he answered: "O no, my Father. For me there is not the least chance. If a boy is set free it is generally the youngest—unless he is very bad—and there are seven—eight—yes, I think nine, who are younger than I am."

"Yes, yes," said the priest.

"But I do hope that poor man over there—the one who is sitting near that pillar, Father—will be one of the two. His wife came to see him yesterday and she wept so bitterly. One of their children died last week, and another is very sick and is crying out for his father. It does seem so sad. And the man is only here for a debt."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed the priest. "But you are right, my Pierre, to wish for his release. Only, alas! there are several similar cases. There is a man in bed whose only hope of recovery lies in his release."

"I wish, O how I wish," began the lad and hesitated.

"What do you wish, my child?"

"Well, father, I do so wish I could persuade the boy who will be released to give his chance to one of these men. But of course that is too much to expect, isn't it?"

The friar looked at the boy keenly and without speaking.

"O for me it wouldn't matter, because, you see, my mother is dead, and my father is at the wars with the Count. But I know that some of these boys have fathers and mothers who will be so unhappy until their sons are released."

"And would you really give your own liberty for one of these two men, my son?"

The boy laughed merrily as he said: "But, my father, *of course* I would. Unfortunately, I shall not have the chance."

"You would not wish me to say this to the Governor, I think?"

"But if there were the least chance for me, my Father, I would implore you to do so," said the boy.

. . . . . .

Monday morning came, and again the bells of the churches pealed out. A band of trumpets in the courtyard of the prison told of the arrival of *Le Roy de l'Aumône,* and the excitement among the prisoners grew painfully intense.

Expecting nothing for himself, Pierre the page stood on the fringe of the crowd of prisoners waiting for the trumpets to cease, waiting tremblingly for the proclamation of the herald of the King of Alms.

A great shout arose as the first name was announced, a shout of approbation, for Jacques Aubon, the man whose

dying child was calling for him, had the sympathy of many. Vociferously enough did Pierre shout with the rest.

But when the applause had subsided and the herald in his stentorian voice called out the name of *Pierre de Gascon,* the bearer of that name staggered and fell on the stone floor in a deep swoon.

. . . . . .

When Pierre recovered consciousness he found himself lying on a silken couch in a tapestry-hung chamber. The Governor's wife was holding his hand, and the Governor was bathing his temples.

"So!" exclaimed the latter as the boy opened his eyes. "Ah, that is good! We shall soon be well again, eh? Take this, my brave one!"

Pierre sipped the cordial, glancing at the man's face as he did so. The Governor was certainly smiling, but neither his words nor his smile seemed to be ironical, and his manner was fatherly and kind.

"Poor little one!" cried the lady as she bent over him and pushed the long hair back from his forehead and eyes. "Poor little brave one! O but your color is coming back quickly. You will soon be quite well. Yes, you want to ask questions, do you? Your eyes are interrogatory. Well, well, my child, everything is quite as you would wish it. The good Père Antoine told us of your generous desire. The poor sick prisoner is free. I shall call you my brave one once again. Ah, you can sit up? That is good. Now, another sip of this fine cordial."

But there is no cordial in the world like timely-bestowed praise, and Pierre was already beginning to feel strong and glad.

"Yes, the two men are released," said the Governor, an hour later, when Pierre declared that now he felt quite well and able to walk. My lady had apparently left the room. "And you, my poor child, remain a prisoner," the man went on. "Ah, that is sad."

"But, Monsieur, it would have been sadder for him."

"You think so? Well, well, that is as it may be. And you feel now that you are quite ready to go back to prison?"

"Quite ready, my lord," said Pierre jumping up from his seat.

The Governor suddenly turned away his head. His eyes had fallen on the boys' hose, much worn about the ankles and showing unmistakably where the friction of fetter-rings had frayed them.

"How long have you to remain in confinement?" asked the man, still looking away from Pierre.

"Not quite nine months, my lord."

"Nine months!" ejaculated the Governor. Under his breath he muttered, *"Mon Dieu!* to a youngster nine months is a lifetime."

Then something happened so suddenly and so quickly that for the moment it took away Pierre's breath. For almost before he realized that Madame had entered, the Governor's wife rushed across the salon, threw her arms about the astounded boy and folded him to her breast.

"My poor little brave one!" she cried, "this naughty Governor is teasing you. The good Père Antoine has just arrived with your pardon from the King himself. You are my prisoner now. I have put you deep down in the dungeon of my heart. Are you content to remain there, my brave child?"

"But, madame——" Pierre's speech was broken by a sob.

"Nay, nay," said the Governor, taking the boy's hand. "Call her—*mother*. The good God has at length sent us a son. Ha—ha! here is Père Antoine! Come in, my Father, and give us your blessing."

. . . . . .

Not only did Pierre de Gascon become the adopted son of the Governor and his wife, but in after-years he succeeded to his foster-father's important and honorable office. Known to his generation as the Pitiful Governor, he was ennobled by the King, and led a long life of usefulness and piety, a life filled with works of mercy and charity.

But always his watchword was—*Never run away from the good God.* No matter how great a criminal he had to deal with, or how utterly hopeless might seem to be the case of some poor prisoner committed to his care, Governor de Gascon gave himself no rest until he had persuaded young and old alike to seek again and again the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Love.

GISLI THE ICELANDER.

GISLI was fifteen years old, and to-morrow he had to die. He was sturdy and strong and full of life and health as any Norse boy in the land; nevertheless by this time to-morrow he would be a corpse.

And his death would be a violent and an ignominious one—that was the hardest part of the terribly hard fact. Young as he was, he would have a strong halter knotted about his sunburnt neck, and in the sight of his own countrymen he would swing from the gallows of King Magnus.

The condemned lad had no more tears to weep. In the darkness and the silence of his cell he could do nothing but pray. It was true that he had committed a great crime, and for that he was truly sorry: yet it seemed to him that at least some soul on earth might pity him and allow that the sin, great as it was, had not been committed without great provocation. But then not every son knew what it was to witness the murder of his own father. And—the thought would come in spite of his prayers—not every boy would have had courage enough to avenge his father's death.

Yes, it was a wicked crime that Gisli had committed, and he had confessed it with true sorrow. His father was dead; his father's murderer was dead; and now he, Gisli, the killer of his father's murderer, had to die on the gibbet.

More than once in his young and happy life he had been face to face with death. On the high seas in storm and tempest he had waited fearlessly for an end that seemed certain and immediate. But the sons of hardy Norsemen were born to brave the perils of the deep: many seemed born to perish in the waters that, until the Day of Judgment, will never give up their dead. An honourable and a happy ending that, though to the Norseboy life is always fair and sweet.

Until to-day, Gisli had not fully realized how desirable life could be, and how dear to its possessor. Until the gyves had been fast riveted upon his sturdy ankles, and the manacles of steel securely locked upon his brown wrists, he had not experienced this complete sense of hopelessness, this knowledge of the utter uselessness of any attempt to escape his fate, the absolute blankness of soul and feeling that now oppressed him. Heavy as was the weight of iron upon his limbs he scarcely felt it. Soul and body alike seemed numbed, and only the absolute numbness of death could be greater.

Ah, why had not he and his poor murdered father remained in their Iceland home? Why had they settled in this land of Norway, and under a King so tyrannical as Magnus? Yet they had only done what so many countrymen of theirs in that twelfth century were wont to do. Alas for the day when they met that murderous servant of the King!

Here within the precincts of the royal residence were many of Gisli's countrymen—too powerless, however, and too few to help the unfortunate lad for whom the gallows was already prepared. Doubtless his one friend, Teit the son of Islief, had done what he could; but what power on earth could change the will of Magnus? It was the King's

servant the boy had slain. It was the King himself who had condemned Gisli to the gibbet.

It seemed to the weary boy that he had slept long and heavily, and that he had been awakened by the sound of his shackles striking the stone floor as he turned him in his sleep.

But, no. There was a noise of voices outside his cell. Perhaps it was already morning, and the officers had come to lead him to the gallows. It must be, he thought, that through sheer heaviness and grief he had spent the half of yesterday, and the whole of the night in sleep.

Now, at any rate, he was fully awake. The voices were nearer, and were raised in anger. There was iron striking upon iron, and the blows were falling upon the bolted door of his cell.

Was it possible that his friends, his own countrymen, had banded themselves together and were coming to rescue him? Surely that was the voice of Teit, the son of Islief.

Suddenly and with a great crash the cell door was flung open, and Teit and his Icelandic followers rushed in triumphantly.

"Courage, Gisli," shouted the young man, "you shall not die on the gibbet. Now, lads, where are your hammers? Off with his irons, quick!"

Seizing a hammer, Teit himself smashed the iron rings that encircled the boy's ankles, while another broke the handcuffs that confined his wrists.

Gisli was free, and with a great shout the party fled from the prison.

Almost immediately they found themselves surrounded by the King's guard.

"We will shed the very last drop of our blood in defence of this child of our country," shouted Teit, drawing his sword and bidding his followers do the same.

Dazed and bewildered as he was, the newly-released boy saw at once that the combat would be an unequal one. Brave and intrepid as his countrymen were, they were comparatively few in number, whereas the King's guard was strong and well-armed, and its numbers could so easily be augmented.

Yet it was a wonderful moment for Gisli. Hope had come back to him with a rush. Already he was freed from his cell, and from the irons that had confined his limbs. No longer was he alone—one poor solitary boy prisoner, condemned to a hateful death.

But weapons were flourishing in the air, and men were advancing one upon another. Of a truth the struggle would be a brief and a bloody one. Brave as Teit was he would soon be overpowered by numbers. Courageous as were his followers it was certain that they would soon be cut to pieces.

Standing there and fully realizing the sweetness of life and freedom, Gisli came to the sudden and truly heroic resolution that his escape would only be bought at a terrible price. He could not, he would not suffer the shedding of his countrymen's blood. After all, he thought, the life of a boy was a small matter enough compared with the lives of these brave Icelanders.

"Not one of you shall die for me," he shouted in his high boyish treble. "Nay, my friends, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I love you for your goodness; but not one drop of blood shall be spilled for my sake."

Wresting himself from the kind arms that would have restrained him, the lad sprang forward and approached the King's men.

"I surrender," said the boy simply. "Take me back to prison. Better that I should be hanged upon the gallows than that these should die by the sword."

Strong hands were instantly laid upon him, and through the ranks of his weeping friends he was hurried back to a stronger and a safer prison.

On a great open plain where the *Council of the Thing,* as it was called, was wont to be held, stood the gallows upon which criminals were hanged. Great was the crowd assembled to witness the hanging of the boy Gisli, for not only had the King commanded the presence of his entire household together with many soldiers, but he had bidden every Icelander in the neighborhood to attend the execution.

The morning was sunny and clear, but cold, and as the poor boy was led out of his prison to look upon the beautiful earth for the last time, he shivered. Slowly, and with his hands bound behind his back with thongs, Gisli walked in the midst of a strong guard to the place of doom. Once he raised his sea-blue eyes and saw the great crowd of onlookers, the King sitting in a high and prominent place surrounded by soldiers. Again he lifted his head and straight in front of him was that awful gibbet, the long, noosed rope swaying to and fro in the fresh morning breeze.

Few indeed there were in that big crowd that did not pity and compassionate the young criminal. In the breasts of his own countrymen, deep sorrow struggled with rage

and indignation. The lad was to be done to death before their very eyes, and they were powerless to deliver him.

But among the many whose hearts were wrung with pity there stood an Icelander whose name was one day to be widely known, and whose fame was to extend far beyond the northern island of which he was destined to be Bishop. The saintly John of Holar had arrived only the night before, just in time to hear the sad story of Gisli and the account of his attempted rescue.

Already with his friend the King this holy priest had pleaded long and earnestly for the life of the condemned lad. Made more angry and obdurate by the action of Teit, Magnus would not listen. Gisli, he said, must die on the gibbet. In vain did the priest urge the criminal's tender years—the terrible provocation he had received on account of the murder of his own father—the heroism he had shown when he had been given an excellent chance of escaping the justice of the law. "The brat shall be gibbeted!" was all the King would say.

Overwhelmed with sorrow, the man who was one day to be known as St. John of Holar, had joined the crowd at the place of execution. Whatever spiritual comfort he could give to the poor child, that of course he was only too anxious to offer.

Making his way to the culprit's side, John noticed that the boy was but lightly clad in a leather tunic and that saving for the irons that had been left upon them his legs and feet were bare.

"You shall have this cloak, my poor child," said the compassionate priest as he removed his own mantle and hood. Then as he was about to wrap them round the trembling lad,

John of Holar suddenly remembered that this garment had been given to him by no less a person than King Magnus himself. Turning away from Gisli for the moment, John approached the King, who was seated close to the gallows.

"Sire," began the priest, "this cloak was your Majesty's gift to me last winter. Have I your permission to do what I will with it?"

The King gave an angry gesture of assent, and immediately turning to the boy, Father John began tenderly to wrap the garment about him, speaking into his ear words of comfort and consolation and encouragement.

"Be brave in death, dear child, as you have been brave in life. The pain will be sharp, but very short. Think now only of Jesus Crucified. Though you have sinned, by true penitence, my son, you have been forgiven: remember Him who, though very Innocence, was hung upon the gibbet of the Cross."

Lovingly as a mother wraps her child before placing it in its cot to sleep did the holy man fold the long cloak about the boy's body—hiding the bound hands and fettered feet, and carefully disposing the hood about the neck and shoulders.

Impatiently enough stood the hangman, waiting to fix the noose of the rope upon the criminal's neck.

The priest embraced him, and gave him the image of the crucifix to kiss.

"Courage, my child," said John as the boy began with difficulty to mount the ladder of death. "Call upon Jesus with great confidence and love."

Whispered words of absolution were the last sounds that fell upon Gisli's ear as the rope was hurriedly affixed.

A moment afterwards, the body of Gisli was swinging in mid-air.

No need now to linger in the neighborhood of the gallows. Far and near could the poor body be seen, looking so small as it hung on high, swayed into gentle motion by the winds of heaven.

Yet as the King returned hastily to his castle it was noticed that his countenance was black as midnight, while the faces of the Icelanders were almost joyful. They knew, and the King knew, the significance that attached to the hanging of Gisli in the royal cloak.

For in the minds of these rough Norsemen the boy's execution had been robbed of all its ignominy by the fact that he had suffered death in a robe that had once been the property of and probably worn by Magnus himself. In spite of the King's implacable anger, the lad's end could be spoken of for all time as an honorable one.

So, sad at heart as they were, the Icelanders slowly turned their back upon the gibbet and returned to their quarters, greatly relieved in mind, and invoking the blessing of Heaven upon the kindly head of Father John of Holar.

Father John himself had not yet done with the gallows, or with the body that hung thereon.

Waiting until all was quiet and the great plain was cleared of spectators the priest returned to the gibbet. Praying to God with great fervor he reared the ladder which had been flung upon the ground, and mounted it hastily.

His task was a difficult one, and he did not cease to implore the help of Heaven.

Had he succeeded, or had he failed? Had the hangman

unwittingly assisted him by a too hasty adjustment of the rope, or wittingly out of compassion for the boy himself?

The rope was cut. Gently did the priest bear the body to the earth. With trembling eager fingers he undid the noose.

"*Deo gratias!*" sang the good man as he unwrapped the mantle and severed the thongs that bound the lad's hands. To some purpose had he so carefully disposed that hood about the child's throat. It seemed certain that the neck was still unbroken.

Yet Gisli lay stretched upon the green grass, insensible, and apparently lifeless.

"O God," cried the priest, "give back to us the soul of this poor child, and I promise that he shall not depart from Thy house for ever."

A moment later great joy filled the soul of Father John. The eyes of Gisli suddenly opened, and he took a long deep breath. Then he looked at the holy man and said with a smile, "Why did you wake me, Father?"

"Because, my dearest son, it is time for us to go down to the sea," said the priest, breaking the iron rings upon the lad's feet. "Even now our countrymen are abroad. I am going to give you back to God and to your Fatherland."

THE SMILING SAINT.

ONE Saint makes many. Almost without number were the souls that Saint Columban, the great Irish missionary of the Seventh Century, led to God; numerous also were the disciples who followed him and who were helped by him to reach a state of perfection. Among the latter few are more interesting and engaging than Deicolus.

Very young must the boy have been when he left Ireland to settle with Columban in East Anglia; and when the great founder of religious houses passed from England into France and began to build the famous abbey of Luxeuil, Deicolus could not have been very old. Certainly the lads of that period were not wanting in grit. Hard living, hard labour, the perils and dangers of travel, immense application to study, the performance of the humblest offices—these things were the daily bread of the young who gave themselves to the service of Christ, the Source of Courage.

Such a willing, happy service too! Deicolus himself seems to have been the very soul of cheerfulness, one of the many beautiful qualities that endeared him to his Abbot. He might well have earned for himself the nickname of *The Smiler,* for no matter what work he happened to be engaged in his face was always bright and sunny. St. Ignatius once asked a young Brother why he was always laughing—bidding him in the same breath to persevere in that holy cheerfulness

which makes for perseverance in all good works. The same question was put to the young Deicolus by St. Columban; and as the incident has been prettily versified by an anonymous poet, we cannot do better than quote the lines in full:—

Drawing the water, hewing the wood,
Deicolus the happy, Deicolus the good;
Never without a smile on his face,
Full of a sweet peculiar grace.
Serving at table, singing in quire,
Fetching the logs to the great hall fire;
Teaching the boys their sacred song,
Smiling, smiling the whole day long.

His saintly Father, with calm grey eyes,
Looked on the youth with glad surprise:
'O Deicolus happy, Deicolus good!
Tending the sick, or watching the gate,
Labouring early and resting late,
Teaching grammar or teaching song—
Why art thou smiling the whole day long?'

Deicolus blushed, and 'I smile,' said he,
'Because no one can take my God from me.'

A great sorrow came both to Columban and Deicolus when the fierce Queen Brunchant, and her unworthy son the King of Burgundy, expelled the Abbot from the monastery of Luxeuil. But like the man of courage that he was, Columban immediately set off to preach the gospel and to found more monasteries elsewhere. Among his followers was Deicolus. Bravely they marched away setting their faces toward another country, and leaving behind them an abbey that soon became one of the glories of France.

Now from what follows it is clear that although Deicolus was so merry and so active he was not very robust. Or it may be that even at this period he was still nothing more

than a growing boy; for after they had gone some distance on their weary journey, the lad's bodily strength was exhausted, and he was compelled to own that he was unable to walk any further. To part from his beloved Abbot was indeed a hard thing, but it was inevitable. Greatly compassionating his disciple, St. Columban gave him the permission he sought, to lead the life of a solitary. They were still in the Kingdom of Burgundy, and no doubt St. Columban knew that the comparative fertility of the neighbourhood would furnish the young hermit with the necessaries of life; nevertheless, the parting was a very painful one. To say "Farewell" was a bitter sorrow to both Abbot and monk. Shedding many tears Columban said: "God Almighty—out of love to Whom thou didst leave thy native land, and hast ever been to me a most obedient child—bring us together in the Majesty of His glory."

Then Deicolus threw himself into the Abbot's arms, weeping loudly and long. "The Lord give thee blessing out of Sion," said the Saint, gently disengaging himself from the sobbing lad, "and may He make thee to see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long."

For the first time in his life Deicolus found himself in actual solitude. Throwing himself on his knees he prayed fervently to his Father in Heaven: then he began to penetrate into the depths of the forest. He would build for himself a little hut far away from the homes of men, and there would he live on the fruits of the earth. For years he had been accustomed to hard fare, and in the forest he would sometimes find berries and nuts.

Commending himself to God as he went along, he came across a swineherd whose pigs were feeding upon the acorns.

The man was astonished to see a stranger in such an out-of-the-way place; Deicolus told him that he was a monk, and that he wanted to build a hermitage in some solitary spot where there was a stream of water. The swineherd said there was only one such place, and that was close to a little lake called Luthra. "Could you not show me this place?" asked Deicolus. "I daren't leave my pigs to take care of themselves," the man answered. "Don't be afraid of that," Deicolus urged, planting his own staff in the ground. "If you will go with me this stick of mine shall keep them together until you return."

We need never be astonished at thenumber of miracles that were worked in those primitive times. The simple, fervent faith of the people made them possible, as well as the sanctity of the many great servants of God who performed them. Fully believing the word of the young monk the swineherd brought him to Luthra, returning to find his pigs quietly feeding in the neighbourhood of the youth's staff.

To the great joy of Deicolus he found not only a lake with springs of sweet water but a little chapel dedicated to a saint who was greatly loved at that period, St. Martin of Tours. The young hermit's cheerfulness had indeed been much tried by the parting with his beloved Father Columban; but God had been good to him in leading him to so pleasant a retreat and to the neighbourhood of the forest chapel, and his heart was full of thankfulness.

But Deicolus soon had reason to remember that the chapel was private property. It belonged to a gentleman named Weifhardt, and was served by a priest who was anything but an amiable man. One day when the monk went to make his usual prayer, he found that the door and the windows

had been filled with thorns and brambles. Disregarding these impediments, Deicolus entered the chapel. When the priest heard of it he told Weifhardt, who flew into a rage and ordered his servants to find the hermit and give him a severe flogging. Unfortunately for their master, the men obeyed him literally, and almost immediately afterwards he was seized with a complaint that threatened to be fatal. His good wife Berthilda, not doubting but the disease had been sent as a punishment for her husband's cruel conduct to the hermit, sent her servants to implore Deicolus to visit the castle. With all haste the holy man obeyed the summons, and, praying fervently to God, did not leave Weifhardt until he was cured.

Great good came out of the evil this man had done, for, as a thankoffering to God and Deicolus, he bestowed upon the hermit not only the little estate of Luthra, but the chapel itself and the adjoining wood. Full of gratitude to God, Deicolus sang, "This is my rest for ever and ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it."

Soon after this it chanced that the King, Clothaire II., came to the forest to hunt. Quietly reading in his cell Deicolus was startled by the sudden appearance of a wild boar hard pressed by dogs. Rushing into the hermit's little oratory the beast fell panting before the altar, while the monk standing at his door confronted the hunters and the dogs. The boar had taken sanctuary, said Deicolus, and its life must be spared.

Marvelling at the hermit's courage, the King asked him many questions and soon found that he was dealing with one of God's Saints and a disciple of Columban. It is the duty and the privilege of the rich to offer gifts, and before

the King rode away he had bestowed upon Deicolus the game in the forest, the fish in the streams, and the grapes in the neighboring vineyards. Then the hermit called to mind that Columban had once told him that, before his death, he should rule over three kingdoms. Here was the prophecy's fulfilment.

So now Deicolus had the means to build and to support a community. Novices flocked to him in numbers, and his house soon became an important abbey. Journeying to Rome he returned with a special charter from the reigning Pontiff and many privileges. With great gentleness and sweetness, and an abiding cheerfulness which endeared him to his subjects, he ruled his community for many happy years.

NEWS OF THE NOWELL.

News of a fair and marvellous thing,
(The snow in the street and the wind on the door),
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell we sing!

CHRISTMAS morning in the city of Tours—seven hundred years ago. All night long its narrow streets have been crowded with wayfarers; all through the morning hours its churches have been thronged with worshippers of the Holy Babe. Since the cathedral bells rang their merry peal for the Midnight Mass, the snow has not ceased to fall; but now at the dawn of day, and as the minster bells ring out again for the Mass of the *Aurora,* the sky begins to clear. The silent storm of snow is spent; but what a festal garment of white it has woven for house-roof and gable, for turret and tower and spire! What a spotless, wool-like carpet it has spread over every street and lane and bridge of this royal city!

Far away from the cathedral, in the chapel of his kingly castle, the good Count of Mans has kept a night-long vigil with his knights and squires and pages. There he has heard the solemn Matins and Lauds of the Nativity, and the grand Mass of midnight. There he and his attendants have remained until a little before daybreak, only to form in devout procession and pass through the snow-covered city to the minster walls.

Banners of silk and gold hang from the cathedral tow-

ers, and the ringing of its deep-toned bells fills the city with sound. Comes mingling with the Christmas chimes the blare of silver trumpets, and the muffled tramp of many horses on the fresh-fallen snow. The progress of the royal party has begun.

A splendid, shifting scene is this early morning procession through the long, narrow, crooked streets of the city, out from the gates of the castle built by Henry the Second of England, past the huge tower of Charlemagne in which his queen lies buried, over the narrow bridge that spans the Loire, on to the cathedral founded by the great St. Martin —once the Bishop and now the patron, the glory and the pride of Tours. A lovely, moving picture, the people think, as they crowd the river banks, and line the tortuous streets, and press about the minister's western door. For upon the snowy background gleam a hundred ruddy tints—the cherry-colored silk of the boy-pages, the scarlet of the men-at-arms, the peach-colored velvet of the knights, and last of all the royal purple, half concealed with folds of ermine whiter than the snow upon the streets.

Denser grows the crowd as the van of the procession reaches the cathedral precincts. It is natural that the people of Tours should wish to see their ruler, since it is only upon the greater feasts of the Church he comes amongst them. Natural indeed that they should wish to gaze upon one whose greatest pleasure is to do honour to the King of Heaven—one who for his own glory would scorn to make external show, but whose delight it is publicly to proclaim himself the vassal of the King of Kings.

Already the pages have dismounted and left their horses to the care of the grooms. A great space is kept before the

minster door for the royal entry, but the people press and surge about the walls, and many struggle in vain to get a foremost place upon the fringe of the crowd. One small boy has just succeeded in forcing himself to the front, and stands close pressed against a buttress within a few feet of the cathedral entrance.

A pale-faced little lad of fourteen, and by his dress a scholar and a cleric. The hood falls back from his head as he emerges from the mass of waiting people, and his tonsure is plainly visible. He is shivering with cold now, as he stands exposed to the full force of the north wind, and his short cassock and thin black mantle are verily a poor protection from the biting breeze. Yet it is clear that he is radiantly happy. Excitement, or the cold, has brought a faint tinge of color to his pallid cheeks, and his dark eyes shine and glisten as he assures himself that he is within easy reach of the great porch and that there is no fear of his being unable to follow the procession once it has passed into the cathedral. He is not at all indifferent to the pageant that is approaching; but, although he has served at the altar of one of the city churches thrice this morning, he longs to assist at the Mass of the *Aurora* in the minster. *"Puer natus est nobis,"* he keeps whispering to himself as though it were the burden of some sweet song he could not forget; *"Puer natus est nobis, et Filius datus est nobis"*: "A Child is born to us, a Son is given to us." The joy of this little tonsured cleric is the true Christmas joy. If the Boy so lately born bring any other happiness, well and good; but it was the birth itself that brought such joy to Mary, and that has made the whole world rejoice for twelve hundred years. If it bring only cold and suffering—well, did it bring

other than this to the Boy who was born at midnight?—Such were the thoughts of young Martin the little clerk of Tours, as he stood shivering by the minster door at the dawn of Christmas morning.

He had no thought of envy as he watched the rosy-faced page-boys in their bravery of white fur and cherry-colored silk, walking to and fro between the divided crowd—stamping their long fur-lined boots and making their silver spurs ring as they did so. Noble-looking lads they certainly were, graceful and well developed in form, healthy-looking and beautiful in feature; the sons of great lords every one of them, yet proud and happy enough to hold the stirrup or the bridle of their master, and to serve him in hall with basin and ewer, with cup and platter. Pious and good too, it may be hoped, since their lord was the model of a Catholic prince, and would never knowingly suffer the smallest evil to find place in his well-regulated court. But—thought young Martin—not one of them is a tonsured cleric. He would not change places with any one of them, even if such a thing were possible. Far from being of noble birth, Martin was the son of a poor weaver living in one of the narrowest lanes in that great city; yet the King of Glory had chosen the weaver's son to be one of His royal pages. Surely it was a greater matter to serve at the altar-table of God than to wait upon any earthly king. And if the boys before him were looking forward to their knighthood, was not he, Martin, waiting longingly for a far more regal order than that—nothing less indeed than the order of Melchisedech, the eternal priesthood?

Yet there was no pride in the little scholar's heart as he thought of these things. *Puer natus est nobis*, was still

echoing in his mind, and he knew that, before all things, Mary's Boy was humble, meek and loving, and that if he would be a true page and faithful knight of the kingly Christ, he also must be poor of spirit, and truly humble.

But now the bells which, for a time, had ceased to peal, broke forth afresh, and the notes of the trumpets reached the ears of the waiting crowd. The Count was already in sight. A little cloud of smoke floated out through the cathedral porch, and a whiff of incense (that sweetest of odors to the Christian's sense) sent a new thrill of joy through the shivering young cleric. He knew that the procession of priests was approaching the entrance from the interior, in order to meet the Count and to conduct him to his place close to the high altar.

Martin did not envy his sovereign's pages, but he found it hard to put away the wish that he were one of that band of boy-clerics connected with the cathedral of his patron St. Martin. He could see the holy water bearer from where he stood, as also several of the singing-boys and acolytes. How beautiful were the fair white albs and amices they wore, and how splendid the cloth of gold copes he knew the priests were vested in! Happy boys, he thought, to have a part in so great a function.

"And yet," said Martin to himself, "their office is the same as mine, and the Holy Sacrifice is everywhere the same —whether it be offered at the side altar of a small church or at the high altar of a great cathedral."

The thought comforted him a good deal; yet he could not help looking with a certain longing towards the cathedral porch, and wishing that he had an office, however small, among the priests and clerics there assembled.

But now the crowd at Martin's back began to surge and sway afresh, for the knights had already appeared, and close behind them was the Count himself. Horses were rearing and capering as they were led away by stable-boys and grooms, and the men-at-arms were being drawn up in two long lines to form a passage for the royal procession. Devout-looking and dignified, yet with a happy smile upon his face, the Count rode to within a few feet of where Martin was standing. Instinctively the boy felt that the moment their prince had entered the porch the people would press forward and crowd into the cathedral. Martin thought if only he could get within the entrance all would be well. Slipping quickly past the soldier who was now standing almost in front of him, the boy gained the porch, and passing bare-headed the group of ecclesiastics, stationed himself far back in the corner on the right-hand side of the door. His boldness startled him when he realized what he had done. The Count himself was barely on the threshold, and yet he, Martin, had already entered. He blushed a little, but he was not afraid of the consequences of his action. The cathedral was God's house, and not the palace of any earthly king. Besides, was Martin not a cleric, and could he not claim the privileges of his state? Had he not a sort of right to stand there among the clergy, although remote from them? It was true he lacked the choir-dress necessary to fit him for a part in the procession; but then he had no intention of joining it: all he wished for was a place to pray in during the solemn offering of Holy Mass.

But the boy little thought that the sharp eyes of the Count had detected his manœuvre. Standing now, bare-headed, under the great doorway, and bowing low as he received the

holy-water from the priest—the great lord of Tours paused as the procession reformed within the porch and began to move forward within the cathedral. Looking straight towards the corner of the porch where Martin stood with his back against the wall, the good Count smilingly beckoned to him. Nervously the boy came forward and bent his knee.

"Tell me, my little clerk," said the Count in a kindly and almost jocose tone,—"have you any news for me?"

There was silence for a moment during which the trembling lad looked up into the great man's face. Its kindly expression immediately reassured the little cleric.

"Yes, sire," he answered in a low, but audible voice; "most excellent news."

The Count started. Could it be that the boy before him was the bearer of some State secret—a messenger, perhaps, disguised as a cleric?

"Quick then;" ejaculated the Count, "tell me your news!"

"*Puer natus est nobis*" (began the little scholar reverently), "*et Filius datus est nobis.*"

Greatly moved and edified, the Count took the boy by the hand and raising him from his kneeling posture said: "Excellent news in truth, and news for which only the Boy who is born can reward you. Let us go then and worship the new-born Boy, for Holy Mass is now about to begin. And do you, my little clerk, take your place with the cathedral clergy. It is meet that the Child who is given to us be surrounded with the children of the Church."

Gladly enough would Martin have knelt in a corner of the nave, but this was not to be. Passing into the church the Count bade him take a place in the stalls of the choir.

Hesitating for an instant, the lad bowed low, and turning up the south aisle passed into the sacristy. Explaining the Count's message to the sacristan, the latter immediately provided Martin with amice and alb. Vesting quickly, and with beating heart, he passed into the choir by a side door, and betook himself to the remotest place he could find among the clerics of the third form. His heart was full of joy, and as the choir began the Introit—*Lux fulgebit hodie super nos: quia natus est Dominus*—his voice shook as he tried to join in the singing, and a stream of tears flowed down his cheeks. What a delight to find himself, if only for the first and last time in his life, so near to the high altar of his beloved patron's church! On such a day too, and under such extraordinary circumstances!

Certainly our young cleric had a hard fight with distracting thoughts during the progress of the Holy Sacrifice. Try as he would, he could not but think of what had so recently happened in the porch of the cathedral. The great Count of Mans had spoken to him, and taken him by the hand, had smiled upon him, and finally had given him, for one happy hour at least, the privilege he most desired, yet one for which he scarcely dared to hope. How glad the boy was that the church was so huge, and that he was, as it were, lost in that great crowd of worshippers. And yet—what a delight for his father and mother if they were within the building (as he was almost sure they were) and if they could see him here in the cathedral stalls! Well, if these thoughts would come back to his mind, no matter how often he put them away, at least he was master of his sight. He would not, saving at the Elevation of the Host, raise his eyes to look at any person or thing. He knew the Count could not be

far away, for on these occasions a special place was prepared for the royal party not far from the altar; but the boy was resolved that he would not look away from the gradual which lay before him. A wise resolve, indeed! for long before the Canon of the Mass was reached, Martin's habitual recollection came back to him, and when the great bell tolled for the Elevation, he could think of nothing save the mystery of the moment, and the words that so sweetly haunted his memory: *"Puer natus est nobis, et Filius datus est nobis."*

Grandly the Holy Rite proceeded to its close, and then the boy found himself walking from the choir to the sacristy in the great procession of priests and clerics which, on this occasion, included every ecclesiastic belonging to the cathedral. Arrived there, he waited with his brother clerics for the signal to unvest. Already the Bishop had passed through the kneeling lines of canons and choristers, yet the signal was not given. The Bishop was awaiting the arrival of the Count of Mans, whose yearly custom it was to greet the clergy at the close of the Mass of the *Aurora.*

Soon the clatter of sword-scabbards was heard and the ringing of spurs, and Martin knew that the Count and his attendants were approaching. Bowing low with the rest as the royal party passed by, the boy did not raise his eyes to look at the Count or at any of his companions. The young cleric felt that sufficient honor had been paid him that day, and had no desire to attract his prince's attention a second time. He rejoiced exceedingly when the Bishop led his noble visitor to an inner sacristy, and the signal to unrobe was at length given. For many reasons Martin longed to get away quickly from the minster. He had another Mass to assist at before noon, in the church of his own parish,

where for several years he had served at the altar. It was now long after nine in the morning, and as yet he was fasting; for though he had received Holy Communion at the Midnight Mass, he had not left the church until the time drew near for the royal procession to the cathedral. Again, the lad was anxious to avoid the curious questioning of the boys of the choir as to the reason of his sudden and unexpected appearance in their midst.

But Martin was not destined to leave the cathedral so quickly. He had scarcely put off his alb when one of the canons came behind him and whispered, "The Bishop desires to see you; follow me!"

A moment later the boy found himself in the presence of the Bishop of Tours and the Count of Mans.

Scarcely in the whole of Christendom was there a happier Christmas party than that held the same day in the poor little cottage belonging to Martin's father, the poverty-stricken weaver of Tours. The Noël had brought them news indeed! Martin, for whom father and mother had made so many sacrifices and whose vocation to the priesthood had long been to them a source of mingled anxiety and delight, was now a member of the great and rich cathedral establishment of Tours! No room now for fear lest they should be unable to supply their pious and loving little son with sufficient food and clothing; no cause now for anxiety lest their pale-faced boy should be unable to continue his studies for the priesthood. Martin had obtained the patronage of a Bishop and a prince!

In later years there was a Canon of Tours who is said to have taken the poor of the city into his own particular keeping. So great was his charity that the people declared

St. Martin himself had come to life again. But oh, the activity and generosity of this Canon Martin at the time of Christmas, and the sharp look-out he kept for poor shivering little scholars!

A BELOVED PUPIL.

IT was the noon of night, and the holy hermit of Culross was saying Matins. Not far from his solitary cell the waves broke upon the shore with their monotonous and soothing rhythm, and made a fitting accompaniment to St. Servan's midnight praises. Solitary indeed was the hermit, solitary his abode; yet above the low chant of his Night Hours, above the booming of the wind around his hut, above the breaking of the waves upon the beach, the holy man heard voices.

Not for one moment did he pause in the recitation of his psalms. Scarcely for an instant ceased these strange, sweet voices of the night. To one whose life is given over to the direct praise of his Creator, and to commerce with a great multitude of unseen and heavenly witnesses, it is not surprising if, like Adam, he hears the voice of God when sounds of earth are stilled, or if there should reach his ears the chanting of the spirits of just men made perfect. To-night St. Servan did not doubt that he had caught an echo of the Lauds of the Angels.

But as soon as he had finished his nocturns the hermit left his cell and passed out into the pale gray light of early dawn. Strange sounds still lingered in the air, and as the

hermit made his way to the seashore there came to his ear the wailing of a little child. Pressing quickly forward he saw a sight that filled him with pity and compassion.

A girl lay on the sea-washed stones, clasping to her heart a newly-born child. To get help for babe and mother was the holy man's first duty, and soon both were brought to a place of shelter. Terrible was the story the woman, little more than a girl, had to tell. Her name was Themin, and she was a princess, the daughter of Loth, King of the Picts. By her father's orders she had been thrown from a steep rock at Mount Dunpeld. Poor sinner as she was, the good God had compassion on her. She was found lying uninjured at the foot of the rock, and her father ordered her to be sent to the wild and desolate region of Culross.

The holy man's care for the child and his mother did not end with the providing of food and shelter and clothing. The girl was uninstructed and unbaptized. Bitterly she bewailed her sin, and when St. Servan was satisfied that she had become a true penitent he baptized her and her little one, giving to her the name of Tanca, and to the boy that of Kentigern, or Kentiern, which means "chief lord."

Though Servan has been spoken of as a hermit, it is certain that he became an Abbot, and that, as so frequently happened, his cell developed into a monastery. He was joined by other monks, and the Abbey of Culross became a place well-known for piety and learning.

It is small wonder that little Kentigern should cling to the holy man who had not only saved his earthly life, but had been the means of his acquiring a right to the life eternal. Great was the love between the old man and the little child, and right gladly did the mother leave her son within the

sacred shelter of Culross. And the boy grew and became very dear to God. Gentle and affectionate, humble and obedient, was Mungho—the "dearly loved one," as the Abbot always called him—and gave promise of becoming both learned and saintly.

Wild indeed was the Scotland of the sixth century, wild and uncouth were its inhabitants; but the monks laboured hard to civilize the boys who were sent to them, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We may easily imagine what a hard time the gentle little Kentigern would have among a herd of half-savage lowland laddies. The well-known legends of the Saint that have come down to us doubtless had their origin in the lawless bullying of his schoolmates.

In old times the striking of a light was often a lengthy and a difficult task, and in consequence of this fires were seldom allowed to die out. One of the duties of the lads at the abbey was that each in turn should rise in the night to throw more wood on the kitchen hearth, and to replenish the oil in the church lamps. On a night when it was Kentigern's turn to fulfil this duty, some of the lads rose before him and carefully extinguished the fire. But the Beloved one did not suffer. Miraculously, or otherwise, he obtained a light—to the confusion of the boys who wanted to get him punished.

The well-known legend of the robin is more startling still. It was the Abbot's pet bird, and lived in his cell. One day the young barbarians wrung the little redbreast's neck and told the Abbot that his Mungho had done the deed. Greatly distressed, Kentigern took into his hands the body of the mangled bird, and raising his tearful, prayerful eyes to heaven, implored the Almighty to give back life to the Ab-

bot's pet. Nothing is too small, nothing too great, for the good God to do when a saint prays as only a saint can pray, and Kentigern did not ask in vain. No wonder these coarse laddies became afraid to play tricks upon their saintly schoolmate.

While one author tells us that Kentigern ran away because he was unable to endure longer the envy of his fellow pupils, another assures us that he was sent to Glasgow by the Abbot St. Servan, in order to work for God. However this may be, we know that the day of his departure was the saddest of his life, and of that of his beloved master and spiritual father. One account says that the Abbot ran after him only to find that the boy had already crossed the river.

"Alas! my dearest son," cried St. Servan; "the light of my eyes, and the staff of my age, wherefore hast thou deserted me? Remember that I took thee from thy mother's womb, nursed thee, and taught thee to this day. Do not desert my white hairs."

"My father," called out Kentigern through his tears, "it is the will of the Most High that I should go."

"Come back, come back, my dearest!" cried the Abbot. "From being a father, I will be to thee a son: instead of being a master, I will become your disciple."

"My father, it cannot be," answered the boy, sobbing very bitterly. "I must go where the Lord God calls me."

The love of a saint is as deep as it is true: but there is nothing of self in it. That which so many unhappy men and women call love of one another is often nothing but unblushing and undisguised selfishness. True affection makes no account of self. The love that existed between these two holy

souls was as deep as the ocean: each of them wished what was best for the other, not for what was most pleasing to himself. Bitter and terrible as the parting was, each at length understood that God willed it.

So the Abbot raised his hands and sent his blessing across the river. Slowly and sorrowfully they parted, never again in this life to meet one another face to face.

The subsequent adventures of St. Kentigern were many and remarkable. God had called him to be an apostle, and though like so many holy men and boys he began his apostolate in a cave, people sought him out and listened to his teaching. He soon converted many to God, and even when he brought Kings into the fold of the Church, and found himself consecrated Bishop of Glasgow, he continued to live in a rocky cell with a stone for his pillow. From this primitive palace he went forth to preach, a wooden, unadorned pastoral staff in one hand, an office book in the other, on foot through the country, passing from the Clyde to the Firth of Forth, living on bread and cheese and milk.

Driven from his native country by a rebellion, St. Kentigern took refuge in Wales with the great St. David, remaining with him until the building of the famous monastery then called Llan-Elwy, and afterwards St. Asaph. Disciples and scholars flocked to this abbey in great numbers, and Kentigern remained here until after the death of St. David in 544, and until Roderick, the King of the North Britons, begged the Bishop of Glasgow to return to his see. So Kentigern left his abbey in the care of St. Asaph, and returned to the land of his birth, bringing with him a devoted band of British monks.

Besides beginning the building of a cathedral at Glasgow,

Kentigern labored to bring back to the faith the Picts of Galloway, and founded numerous missions and religious houses. His relations with the famous and holy Columba, Abbot of Iona, were of the most interesting kind, and there has come down to us a beautiful account of the meeting of these two Saints and their followers at Glasgow.

St. Columba arrived with a great company of monks, and as they entered Glasgow the Abbot divided them into three big choirs. In the same way St. Kentigern met him with three great bodies of boys and monks and aged Fathers. First came the children of the choir, then the brethren who had reached manhood, and last of all the snowy-haired elders, among whom Kentigern took his place.

"They shall sing in the ways of the Lord that great is the glory of the Lord: the path of the just is made, and the way of the saints is prepared"—chanted the choirs of Glasgow. Immediately they were answered by the monks of Iona: "The saints shall go from strength to strength, and unto the God of Gods appeareth every one of them in Sion."

Then the Apostle of the Picts affectionately embraced the Apostle of the Scots, and the two Saints spent several days together in sacred conference.

St. Kentigern died in the year 601 at the age of eighty-five. In life and after death he was famed for miracles. His feast is kept on the 13th of January.

As we write these lines, excavations are being made upon the site of the ancient Abbey of Culross. A number of interesting objects have already been unearthed. One of the discoveries is a tomb which in the opinion of experts dates from the fourth century of the Christian era. It is probably the headstone of a chieftain and is in the form of a crucifix. A sword of very primitive design is incised upon it, and (says the *Times* of September 13, 1905) the original Culdee script and emblems which were engraved upon it have superimposed upon them the later symbols of the Roman Catholic Church. Other slabs of a similar nature are being unearthed.

The Legend of the Robin has been put into charming verse by Miss May Probyn:

God keep thee, little Kentigern,
  Sitting in the school!
Quickly the master will return—
  Thou hast not broken the rule.
From thy task thou hast not stirred,
But the rest have slain the master's bird—

The little bird with the breast of red
  That perched on the master's shoulder,
And picked from his hand the crumbs of bread,
  Each morning waxing bolder—
But the thoughtless lads as he flew by
Have chased and caught him boisterously.

They have snatched him from each other's hold;
  They have pulled off his head.
Rent is the tuneful throat of gold—
  In twain he falleth dead.
Drops of red on the white flags lie,
And the step of the master draweth nigh.

God keep thee, little Kentigern,
  Standing out on the floor!
The coward lads, each in his turn,
  Have accused thee o'er and o'er.
For sake of a little bird's red blood
Thou art to taste the master's rod.

The child hath asked that he may take
In his hand the dead thing small.
He joineth the head to the little neck—
White-lipped the lads grow all.
Lo, the bird hath preened its pretty wing,
Glanced up, glanced down, and begun to sing.

A CHILD OF THE CAMP.

THE camp life of the sixth century seemed scarcely fitted for the rearing of so delicate a boy as Dositheus the page. Happily for the child, his master acted the part of a true foster-father, ever regarding the lad's welfare with careful solicitude. Dositheus had no knowledge of the Christian Religion, and the soldiers with whom he lived could teach him nothing.

But the boy had the curiosity belonging to his tender age, and when in all the bravery of scarlet and gold he bore the cup and waited upon his master at the banquet, he listened eagerly to the conversation of the guests as it turned upon foreign service and travels in the distant East. He was naturally intelligent, and his master liked to answer his questions—liked the boy, who stood at his right hand and bore his cup, to show an interest in the talk of the table.

A strange life certainly for this well-born lad, and in some respects a happy one; for his master's affection seems to have been of a true kind, and Dositheus had every reason to look up to him as a father and a friend.

Now it happened on a certain day that the conversation at mess turned upon Jerusalem, and Dositheus marvelled much to hear it called the Holy City. His curiosity was excited, and he wondered why this place of all others should

be regarded as sacred. Making no secret of his longing to see it he found to his great joy that not only was his master's friend about to start for the East, but that he was going to visit Jerusalem.

"And my Dositheus would like to journey thither—would he not?" his master inquired, seeing the longing in his page's face.

"Yea, master, would I not love to go there!" the boy answered.

"Then, my son, you shall journey with the traveller as his page," said the good-hearted officer.

Now when the man and the boy had arrived at Jerusalem, one of the first places Dositheus visited was that Garden of Gethsemani wherein our Divine Lord suffered His bitter agony. And at that period there was set up in the holy place a terrible and a wonderful picture showing the torments of hell, and the punishment of those souls who had made the sufferings of Jesus Christ of no effect. Not at all understanding the meaning of this awful painting the boy found himself unable to tear himself away from it. He appears to have been alone at this time, for a strange lady near him seeing his astonishment came up to him and began to explain the meaning of what he was gazing upon.

"And is one obliged to go there?" he asked plaintively.

"Nay, my child," she answered, "the good God wishes none to go there. Only the wicked are found in hell, and those who will not let Jesus Christ save them."

Then came from Dositheus the question of questions—that cry of the heart which will be heard from all men to the end of time—"What shall I do to be saved?" This was the beginning of the lad's conversion—as it is of the turning

to God of so many. Fear of the unknown, fear of punishment, fear of hell: a blessed fear, even if its motive be an imperfect one, since it so often leads to that love which destroys all fear, saving the filial and reverential.

Willingly and eagerly Dositheus listened to the lady's instruction in the great truths of Religion; promptly and fervently he began to fast and to pray. It mattered nothing to him that his travelling companions laughed at him; but when they asked him if he was going to be a monk he had to ask "What is a monk?" He had never even heard of the monastic life; but when it was explained to him he lost no time in paying a visit to the nearest religious house, which was that governed by St. Serides.

The Abbot Serides shook his head when Dositheus begged to be received forthwith into the community of Gaza. The holy man looked compassionately upon the boy in his rich dress, and could not but see that the young page was of a delicate constitution and that he had been accustomed to enjoy most of the luxuries of life. Everything seemed to be against the reception of the lad into so austere a community: yet the earnestness and good-will of Dositheus were evident. Indeed, he would not be refused, and at length St. Serides handed him over to that wonderfully holy man,[1]

[1] This Dorotheus informs us that in his childhood he had such an aversion to learning that he took up his book with a great repugnance as if it had been a serpent; but having overcome this obstacle by application, his passion for reading became so strong that the pleasure he found in reading made him often forget to eat, drink, and sleep. (Doctr. x.) At his meals he kept a book open by him, to cast his eye on it whilst he ate; and he had one on his pillow in the night, in which he often read till midnight, and again so often as he waked. Having afterwards renounced the world, he became a disciple of John, the famous Monk of Palestine, who was surnamed the Prophet, and lived sometime in the monastery of the Abbot Serides, but afterwards governed a great monastery between Gaza and Majuma. He intermingles instructive examples with his precepts, and principally inculcates self-denial, humility, meekness, obedience, and assiduous prayer.—*Alban Butler*.

Dorotheus the Archimandrite, who was at that time Master of Novices.

Dorotheus soon saw that his new pupil in the Science of the Saints was much too delicate to practise the austerities which were common every-day matters at that time, so the saintly man began by correcting the lad's self-will, and by teaching him how to govern a somewhat unruly, and hitherto undisciplined, tongue. For it must be remembered that Dositheus was a very recent convert to the Catholic Faith, and that he had entered religion before he had had time to correct the faults of his past life, and to break himself of the many bad habits he had acquired by living among soldiers.

Very gently and prudently did the Novice-Master begin to check the faults of his young charge. Unaccustomed to place any restraint upon himself in the matter of eating, and no doubt encouraged by his late indulgent master to enjoy the good things of the table, Dositheus was now taught how to practise a little mortification.

"How much have you eaten to-day, my son?" inquired Dorotheus some time after the lad's admission to the monastery.

"A loaf and a half, Father," the boy replied. This was five or six pounds weight of bread.

"That is pretty fair," said the good man with a smile; "suppose, my child, you take a trifle less than that to-morrow."

Now the delightful thing about Dositheus was that he always obeyed, or tried to do so, and for this very reason everybody loved him. He took a little less on the morrow, and St. Dorotheus asked him how he felt in consequence.

"Quite well, my Father," the boy said; and then the Novice-Master told him always to take what was necessary, but not more than that. After some time the lad found that half a pound of bread was quite sufficient for his needs.

Soon after this, Dositheus was sent to wait upon the sick. He was such a bright, cheerful lad that those who were ill loved to have him about them, and thanked God for sending them a nurse so attentive and so merry. But saints are not made in a day, and sometimes the suffering are querulous and exacting. More than once Dositheus lost his temper and used language that had been familiar enough to soldiers but which was never heard in a community of monks.

After these little falls the poor lad was very downhearted and repented bitterly. On one occasion he ran from the infirmary to his cell and throwing himself on the floor wept long and bitterly. Indeed he would not be comforted until St. Dorotheus came to him and assured him that when we are sorry for our sins God always forgives, and that it is not so much the falling into sin that we ought to fear as the remaining in it.

In many little ways Dositheus was a trial to those with whom he lived, for among other things his camp life had made him somewhat noisy. One day the Novice-Master heard him shouting in the infirmary itself.

"Brother," said Dorotheus, "go and ask for a bottle of wine."

Dositheus ran to get the wine and soon returned with it to the Saint.

"No, my son," said Dorotheus as the lad presented him with the flask, "I don't want the wine. It is for you, yourself. The rollicking Goths, you know, shout and drink. I

heard you shouting and it seemed to me that all you needed in order to be a thorough Goth was a bottle of liquor."

It does not require much imagination to see the boy blushing for shame and begging his master's pardon. The incident describes only one of many similar attempts on the part of St. Dorotheus to train his young pupil in the way of sanctity.

Sometimes the holy man thought it good to put on a harshness of look and manner which was not natural to him, for there were moments when the lad seemed to need a certain severity of treatment.

Like all boys, and most men, Dositheus now and then gave way to boasting.

"Look here, Father!" he called one day to his master, who had just entered the infirmary, "just see how beautifully I have made these beds!"

"Ah, yes," replied the Saint; "you are certainly a good bed-maker. But I don't think much of you as a monk. A real monk doesn't boast."

There was still a good deal of the child left in Dositheus, in spite of his efforts to lead a life of perfection, and, one may say, in spite of his many successes. One day the steward of the monastery gave him a knife. Quite inordinately pleased with it he showed it to St. Dorotheus. "Let me look at it," said the Saint, taking it into his hand to examine it. "It's just the very thing for cutting up my bread, isn't it, Father?" the boy asked. "Are you very much delighted with this knife?" the old man questioned. "I should just think so, Father," Dositheus replied. "Then, my child, I think you had better give it away. Let some other monk have it; don't you touch it again." Without the least demur

the boy obeyed, and doubtless St. Dorotheus rejoiced in his heart to see the progress his disciple had made in the hardest of all the virtues.

Virtue is not virtue until it is tried, and trifling as these little mortifications may seem, they were true tests of obedience and the sacrifice of self-will. Dositheus was too delicate to flog himself much with whip-cord, or to go about with irons upon his limbs, or even perhaps to wear hair-cloth. He was not strong enough to watch all night in prayer, or to keep the rigorous fasts of his Order. But he asked and obtained strength to do something much harder and much better—something to which these austerities are after all only a help. He could obey. He could run counter to his own will. He could give up things for the love of God. He could receive a rebuke without resenting it. These are the things that help to make the Saint.

But he had to be proved, and his Novice-Master was ingenious in putting the lad's virtue to the test. "I shall send Brother Dositheus to you to-day," said St. Dorotheus to the Abbot Serides; "please pretend to be cross with him and send him away roughly. I want to see how far he has advanced." Now at that time the young novice was studying the Holy Scriptures and was wont to go to his master with any passage that he could not understand. "I can't attend to you," exclaimed Dorotheus when the boy came to his cell, book in hand; "go to the Abbot." So Dositheus went to the Abbot quite humbly and begged him to explain the words of a difficult passage. "Get away with you," said the Abbot boxing his ears; "do you think I have nothing to do but teach an ignorant fellow like you?" It was anything but a light trial to which he was subjected, for it seemed to the

boy that both these holy men had been angry with him for merely doing his duty. However, he went back to his own cell without showing any sign of resentment, and quite determined not to let the remembrance of this seemingly unkind treatment rankle in his mind. And, says the chronicler of this story, no sooner had he reached his cell than the good God gave him light to penetrate and understand the portion of Holy Scripture that he was reading.

Five years passed away, and Dositheus was a young man. His progress in things spiritual had been great, but he had not outgrown that delicacy of constitution which was so apparent in his boyhood. He began to spit blood and to show alarming signs of consumption. Somebody told him that a diet of raw eggs would stop the hemorrhage, but he begged his Superior not to allow him to try this remedy; for at first the idea of this cure had pleased him greatly, and above all things he wished to make a sacrifice of his own will. Seeing him so earnest in desiring the prohibition, and probably knowing that the young man would not be much benefited by taking the eggs, St. Dorotheus said: "Very well, my son; but you shall make trial of every other possible remedy."

But the disease gained upon him, and it soon became evident that God was calling him out of life. "Be constant in prayer, my child," said Dorotheus, as the youth grew worse; "do not let go of prayer." Dositheus replied that all was well with him, and begged for his master's prayers. But when he had grown very weak and the old man asked him if he could still pray, he replied: "Pardon me, my Father, I find it very hard to pray." "Do not be afraid, my son,"

said the old monk, "and do not force yourself to formal prayer. Only have our Lord Jesus present in your heart."

A few days afterwards Dositheus turned to Dorotheus and said: "My Father, I can bear no more." Then replied the Saint, "Go in peace, my child, and stand in the presence of the Most Blessed Trinity. And pray for us."

St. Dorotheus must have marvelled at the obtuseness of some of the monks who could not understand why he had spoken to Dositheus as if he were a saint. "Father," said they, "you promised him Paradise; yet he did not fast, he did not mortify his body, and we never heard of any miracles that he performed." Nothing is more disheartening to a teacher than to perceive that some of his lessons have been misunderstood, and some of his very first principles misconceived. Dorotheus could have retorted very sharply upon these good but somewhat wooden men; however he only reminded them that if Dositheus had not fasted, or practised austerities, he had done something much more difficult—something that is a better test of sanctity than is the working of miracles: *he had given up his own will.*

Soon after the young Saint's death, it chanced that an old monk in the infirmary was praying that God would show him all the holy men of that house who had already entered into Paradise. His prayer was heard, and he saw a vast choir of white-haired monks, and conspicuous among them one young lay-brother, with the dark abundant hair of youth, and a hectic flush upon his cheeks. When he told his vision to some who had so foolishly doubted the sanctity of their departed brother they said, "Without a doubt our Dositheus has entered Heaven!"

A MINSTREL'S MINISTRY.

I.

EVEN when he was a young boy in St. Cadoc's delightful school at Llancarvan, Hyvarnion had been known as the Little Sage. To no small number of our British forefathers God gave the gift of song—not merely the inferior capacity of playing and singing, but that immeasurably higher endowment of creation and invention.

Like his holy master Cadoc and many others of that period, Hyvarnion was a poet as well as a minstrel, a sage as well as a singer. And because his teachers and schoolmates willingly gave him the distinguishing title of Ystwdvech, *i. e.*, the Little Bard, there can be no doubt that at quite an early age he began to show very remarkable powers of thought.

Genuine lover of poetry and of music was Cadoc, and his regard for this gifted pupil was marked. No doubt the Abbot hoped that like so many other well-endowed boys Hyvarnion would one day submit his curly locks to the Church's shears and be crowned with the tonsure of the monk. For the lad was humble and modest, pious and obedient, and seemed to be blessed with all the qualities that the Saint required in those who offered themselves as his subjects. Indeed, full of admiration for the young bard's wisdom and power of improvisation, St. Cadoc one day ven-

tured to engage with him in a sort of contest of song on the subject of the moral virtues.

It was an interesting and a moving spectacle. There in the big cloister-school, in the presence of all the monks and the boys, harp in hand, the saintly Abbot confronted the little school-lad and enumerating the eighteen leading virtues with which a true follower of Jesus Christ ought to be adorned, bade Hyvarnion complete the list.

For one so young it was no light task to try and add to the eloquent and exhaustive speech of the saintly and learned Abbot; nevertheless as soon as his master had finished the little minstrel struck his own harp and began to sing:

> Ever the highest is he who is strongest when he is tried;
> He is the virtuous man who is patient in bearing his cross;
> He who is quick to act yet modest when he succeeds,
> He who is humble of heart and persists in the way that is straight,
> Ready to labour and strive, heedless of all that affrights,
> Ever longing for learning, generous to the untaught,
> Kind in thought and in speech, a doer of beautiful deeds,
> A maker of peace in strife, pure in body and mind,
> To strangers courteous, mild, affable ever at board,
> Just in his daily speech, just in his hourly deed,
> Strict to observe the law of the Body of Christ, the Church,
> Pitiful to the poor and to all who suffer wrong.

The boy ceased and bowing his head knelt at his master's feet.

"Nay," said Cadoc with tears in his eyes, "be not fearful, my child. Verily thine is the prize. In this contest, Hyvarnion, I freely acknowledge thee the victor."

"Not so, my master," said the lad, raising his eyes for a moment to the Abbot's face. "I tried to surpass thee, I, an ignorant young boy. Thine, holy Father, is the victory, for in awarding me the prize thou art but making proof of the possession of true humility."

No person present ever forgot one detail of that striking scene. It seemed to the monks that saint was striving with saint. A great shout rang through the hall, hearty British and Irish cheers both for their comrade and for the Abbot.

Even when the assembly broke up and the young bard's schoolfellow's flocked about him to offer their congratulations, Hyvarnion would not accept the victory.

" 'Tis the Abbot's own teaching," he said modestly. "What should I know of the virtues but for him? And is he not a living example of all that I put in my song? Nay, but I did but sing in my own feeble language the great truths that we have all learnt sitting at his feet. Who of us can ever forget the verses he has taken such pains to teach us? Let us repeat some of them as we walk," added Hyvarnion as the crowd left the cloister and sauntered into the open.

And on their way to the playing-field now one and now another of the lads, led by Hyvarnion, chanted in a lusty reble the following aphorisms:

"Truth is the elder daughter of God."
"Without light nothing is good."
"Without light there is no piety."
"Without light there is no religion."
"Without light there is no faith."
"The sight of God, that is light."

II.

We may imagine with what reluctance the Abbot parted from his little Sage. But the day came when Hyvarnion had to confess that he felt no call to the life of a monk. Anxious as he was to serve God faithfully he could not bind himself by the vows of religion.

And just because Cadoc was a genuine saint he was no narrow and rigid priest. Dearly as he would have liked to retain this gifted and good-living lad, the Abbot thought it the most natural thing in the world that his pupil should desire to see men and cities and to make some trial of the talents God had bestowed upon him. Even when the holy man reflected upon the nature of these talents and remembered how easily they might be put to perilous uses, he did not overlook the fact that God does not ask one man to play Providence over another.

Like all truly good and wise men, he had a horror of trying to force a vocation, and well understood, that to one not called of God, the life of the cloister might prove more dangerous than the life of a Court.

Moreover, he knew Hyvarnion. Young as the boy was he had acquired very solid virtues. The Abbey was no forcing-house, no hot-bed of piety, but a Christian school in which lads were taught to live holily, so that whatever the circumstances of their after-life might be they should prove themselves strong in the hour of trial. A hardy, manly, prayerful life was that of the sixth century schoolboy, calculated to make the weak character strong, and the strong character heroic.

At this period Saxon England offered no scope, no fitting career for a boy like Hyvarnion. Very slowly indeed was it being converted to the Catholic faith; almost imperceptibly was it changing its barbarian habits. But now that Childebert had become the King of the Franks there was something akin to civilization in Gaul, and, doubtless after much cogitation and many prayers, to Paris would Cadoc send the young genius who was so dear to him.

It is probable that at this time the boy was about fourteen, and that he spent at least four years at the Court of Childebert. His office was a high one and an honourable. No mere buffoon was this British lad whose voice could make rough men weep, and the sound of whose harp strings could bring gladness to the saddest of hearts. No court jester was the pupil of the Abbot of Llancarvan, but a poet who sang of themes both high and holy, and who among the mixed crowd of courtiers exercised a ministry of song calculated to make men ashamed of their vices, and to give them some understanding of the exceeding beauty of holiness.

Great and to some extent perilous for this young Briton was the change from the hard fare and stern discipline of the cloister school to the freedom and luxury of a royal palace. Happily the teaching of his holy master and the virtuous habits formed in his childhood stood him in good stead. St. Cadoc's words had sunk deep down into the young minstrel's heart. Gaul too had its saints at this period, and the pure-hearted boy knew by happy experience how lovingly helpful holy men could be.

But a day came when Hyvarnion felt a mighty longing to revisit the land of his birth. With a great desire he pined to see once again his beloved master and the beauty and peacefulness of Llancarvan. He had grown into a tall and handsome youth, strong and sturdy, and no longer could he sing in the dulcet treble of his boyhood.

So with the King's permission Hyvarnion left the Court and travelled from Paris to Brittany, where he felt sure of getting a boat that would sooner or later land him on the shores of Britain.

But there was some delay in getting the necessary craft, and the young man became the guest of Kon-mor, Childebert's vicegerent in Brittany: an honored guest, too, and one for whom fitting entertainment must be provided. So there were hunting-parties, and the killing of wild boar and deer; and it was during one of these hunts there befell the minstrel an adventure that changed the whole course of his career.

Riding one day through the forest, he, who so greatly appreciated the magic of musical sounds, found himself intently listening to the singing of the most beautiful treble voice he had ever heard. Checking his horse he remained motionless for a space, drinking in every note of this enchanting vocal music. It was the voice of a country maiden, and as the young man listened his heart grew soft and tender. Pushing his way through the green boughs and the undergrowth he soon found himself standing in a sunny glade by the maiden's side. And this was the refrain of her song:

There by the water flowing
Close to the streamlet's side,
Like the blue iris growing—
Yet one shall call me his bride.

Truly, thought the young man, I am now of an age when the honest wooing of a bride might be blessed by God and by His Church. Modestly and respectfully he greeted her.

"Tell me what flowers thou gatherest?" he began to say, blushing more deeply than did the startled damsel herself. "But how white and fair thou art! and how sweetly thou singest!"

"These are herbs, young sir," she replied in a low voice.

"They are simples and not flowers. One drives away sadness; another banishes blindness. It is said there is one that overcomes death."

Verily, thought the minstrel, this maiden is as wise as she is beautiful, and, if I mistake not, wise with the wisdom of Heaven.

"Little queen," he said to her, "will you not give me of your simples?"

"Nay, sir," she quickly replied, "I will give them to no man—saving to him who shall be my spouse."

"But will you not permit me to be your spouse?" asked Hyvarnion with great simplicity. And even as she hesitated and turned away the young man's host, missing him from the hunt, rode hastily into the glade.

"Oh, Kon-mor!" exclaimed the youth, "here is the only maiden I ever loved. Will you not help me to persuade her to be my own true wife."

But Rivanon, the lady of the simples and of the song, already loved the handsome and richly-clad man who treated her with such reverence and courtesy.

So Childebert's viceroy rode home and gave orders for a magnificent wedding banquet, and very soon Hyvarnion and Rivanon were made man and wife. And so happy were they that Cadoc's pupil forgot his own country and his father's house, and exchanged the Britain of his birth for the Brittany of his adoption.

After three years of blissful living a new joy came to them in the birth of a son. But the joy was tinged with sorrow, for alas! the boy was blind. Yet his father and mother loved him all the more tenderly for this affliction, and as he lay wailing in his little crib each in turn would speak to him

and soothe him with song. Night and day they sang to him and always would he cease to weep and try to show how much he delighted in sweet sounds. They had called him Hervé, which signifies bitterness, but in the love and care of their child they both found a surpassing sweetness.

III.

When Hervé was two years old his mother experienced the greatest sorrow of her life. Hyvarnion, her devoted and beloved husband, Hyvarnion, the strong and handsome minstrel, was seized with a fatal sickness and soon passed out of life. Her grief was very great, and her condition became exceedingly pitiful. She had no parents living and no well-to-do friends. Rejoicing in his young manhood and in his strength, and always successful in earning by his music everything that he needed, Hyvarnion had made no provision for the wife and child he loved so tenderly.

The little blind boy now became his mother's only earthly consolation. He grew up with that extraordinary love of all things holy which in some children is a special endowment of Heaven. From both father and mother he inherited the gift of poetry and music, as well as great personal beauty of form and feature. Before he was seven years old his one anxiety was to comfort and help his mother; when he reached that truly tender age he at once began to try and earn his living.

For fourteen hundred years have the Bretons sung the praises of little Hervé. He is the hero of many of their prettiest and most pathetic ballads—still chanted round Breton farm-house firesides on winter nights, still recited be-

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neath shady trees on summer days. In one of these songs they describe the golden-haired, sightless little bard of seven led about by a white dog, standing shivering in the wind and rain and snow with no sabots on his bare feet and scarce able to raise his voice in song for the trembling of his poor little limbs and the chattering of his teeth.

They also sing a certain "Song of Souls" composed by Hervé at his father's grave on the evening of the feast of All Saints; they tell too how on returning home, cold and weary, his feet slipped and he fell on the wet soil, and with a wounded and bleeding mouth sought the protecting arms of his mother.

It was when Hervé reached the age of fourteen that a great change took place in his daily life and in that of his mother.

Loving her as he did and earning whatever money he could for her support and for his own, he must have guessed that her heart was now wholly weaned from the things of this world, and that now and again she turned longing eyes towards a certain cloister home where many holy women were living under a religious rule.

Yet knowing too how dear he was to that widowed mother he felt sure that unless he told her of his own yearnings to devote himself more directly to God's service she would never dream of taking a step that would separate her from him for all time.

So one day he spoke to her very tenderly and lovingly, reminding her of the strange wandering life he had led since he was a little child of seven, and telling her how much he longed to go to some solitary place where he could sing

the praises of God and hear no music but that of the offices of the Church.

She listened to him in silence and with fast-falling tears. For though his own desires were so perfectly in union with her own the thought of being separated from her afflicted darling was almost more than she could bear. Yet when she raised her eyes to look upon him, noticing the enthusiasm with which he spoke, seeing also how fair and handsome he was growing and how tall, she told herself that for his own sake it would be well that he should have some protector stronger than herself. For rapidly as the Catholic religion was spreading in Brittany there were many pagans and barbarians in the neighborhood—heathen bards, too, who would certainly bear no good-will towards a Christian minstrel who in all his songs sang of his fair Master, Christ and of the sweet Mother who gave Him birth.

Long and earnestly did Hervé and his widowed mother talk of their prospects, and of her brother Gorfoed who long ago had retired into a solitary place in a neighbouring forest, where he lived the life of a hermit. She indeed would be well content, she said, if her son placed himself in the care of so holy a man and so near a relation. A person of some learning too was Gorfoed, and in spite of the fact that he had sought out a very retired place and had nothing but a little cell to live in, all the boys of the neighborhood regularly flocked to him for instruction.

It is indeed a remarkable fact that the Bretons and the Irish were so keen after letters that no matter how remote the dwelling of a learned man might be they were always quick to discover him and eager to profit by his teaching. As we have already seen, when St. Cadoc and St. Gildas

took up their abode on a desert island, the boys of Brittany soon found them out, and though the lads had to cross the sea in their corricles they thought nothing of the trouble and the peril of these daily journeyings if only they might acquire some tincture of divine and human wisdom.

IV.

Hervé must have started for his uncle's solitude long before the break of day, for, led by his faithful white dog, he arrived just as the morning sun was pouring a pool of light over the open space in front of the hermit's cell. The door was shut, but the boy knocked and the dog barked. Rising from his morning prayer the solitary threw open the door.

But for the presence of the dog, Gorfoed would have mistaken his nephew for one of God's ministering spirits. Standing there in the full light of the morning sun, his beautiful features surrounded by a halo of golden hair, and wearing that calm, rapt expression so often seen on the faces of the blind, Hervé looked more like a radiant angel than a minstrel boy.

"Angel or mortal, I bless thee!" exclaimed the hermit. "A thousand times welcome art thou to my poor cell."

And now for some happy peaceful years the poor lad's wanderings were over. Already his mother was clothed with the habit of religion, and right gladly did he offer his entire being to the good God she had taught him to love and to serve.

Day by day he joined in all the prayers and offices of his guardian. Day by day he sat beside the sturdy Breton lads who crowded to the hermitage and shared their every les-

son. Very soon, and in spite of his blindness, Hervé surpassed every pupil in learning. From his beloved mother he had already learned much, and, as we know, he had those gifts of creation and improvisation for which his minstrel father, the whilom pupil of St. Cadoc, had been distinguished. Marvellous grew the lad's memory, and though his eyes had never looked upon the written letter his mind became stored with every kind of knowledge.

Day by day the little hermitage rang with the music of harp and voice. With reverent admiration did Gorfoed's pupils listen to the blind boy's impassioned minstrelsy. Almost with awe would they make a circle about him under the trees of the woodland, and wait with rapt attention for the inspired music that so quickly rose to his lips. To have the privilege of leading him, to carry his harp, or to offer him any kind of service, these young Bretons were ready to fight one another. They brought him their ripest fruits and their sweetest-smelling flowers. The pick of the autumn berries and the choicest of hazel nuts and filberts were poured into Hervé's lap.

When winter came they brought him the whitest and warmest lambskin that they could procure—tunic and cloak of the fairest and thickest. Content themselves with suits of goatskin, and bands of undressed leather wrapped about their sturdy legs they besought their mothers to make for Hervé long stockings of leather, thick, supple and lined with soft white lambswool. Utterly indifferent to the shape or fit of the wooden shoes they made for themselves, they vied with one another in turning out for Hervé sabots of superior cut, of the lightest wood the forest afforded, and carved as to their insteps with quaint designs.

Thus did they pay their school fees to the hermit, for he would receive no money from them, and for himself nothing but the plainest food and the coarsest garments. But he was glad that the poor, afflicted, yet thrice-blessed lad who had come to him should be warmed and filled and in every way well nourished. For Hervé's earlier life had been a period of great privation, and the wonder was that so delicate a child should have survived those long years of penury and exposure, the time from seven to fourteen when the child sought so hard and not always successfully, to earn enough bread for his mother and for himself.

V.

The happy years of pupilage rolled on and Hervé reached his twenty-first birthday. That the youth should have a strong desire to visit his mother seemed to the hermit-uncle the most natural thing in the world. In fact Gorfoed himself set out with his nephew to find the convent where his sister had taken the veil.

It proved to be a sad, yet a happy and fortunate, visit. Hervé was only just in time to receive his mother's blessing and to add to the exceeding blissfulness of her last moments.

And now another great change was to come about in the life of the blind minstrel. His uncle was no longer young and for some time past had longed to lead a more retired and recollected life.

"Though, my son, you are deprived of bodily sight," said Gorfoed to his nephew as they journeyed home, "your mind is unusually enlightened, and your soul is flooded with the

light that comes down from the Father of Lights. Why should you not take up the work that after so many years of labour I must now lay down? You surpass me both in learning and in holiness. The lads love you and reverence you, and your influence upon them for good is enormous. They will look after your every want; all that you need they will most willingly bring to you."

"If it be God's will and yours, my uncle," said Hervé simply, "I am well content; though it grieves me to the heart to lose you who for seven long years have been my father and my master."

So after a long and affectionate leave-taking the hermit passed away and sought a deeper solitude in which he hoped to prepare himself for that marvellous unending life of Eternity upon which all his hopes were fixed.

Generously and resolutely, in spite of the double loss that wounded a specially sensitive heart, Hervé set himself to the task of teaching. Well-equipped he certainly was, and in possession of all the gifts that a Christian schoolmaster requires. Boys of every age and condition crowded to the hermitage school, leaving it every evening, as an old Breton ballad puts it, "as noisily as a swarm of bees emerging from a hollow tree."

Right glad was the master when the days of sunshine came and he could lead his troop of scholars into the open. There in the midst of them would he sit, his sightless but perfectly formed eyes raised to the sky, and give them the benefit of all the learning with which his mind was filled. Lesson succeeded lesson, music followed arithmetic, the Holy Scriptures came after Virgil, religious maxims in verse, many of them resembling those aphorisms the great

St. Cadoc had taught Hervé's father, were chanted to the strains of the harp:

"Better instruct a child than collect riches."
"The idle boy is laying up misery for his old age."
"Who will not obey the rudder will have to obey the reef."

Such were the maxims that he taught. But above all he was anxious to give these rough lads a rule of Christian life, and for this end he composed a special poem which they learnt by heart and sang to a pleasing melody.

In this song they are instructed to offer their hearts and lives to God the very moment they awake from sleep. "Make the sign of the Cross and say: 'My God, I give Thee my heart, my body and my soul. Make me grow up a good man, or let me die in my youth.' "

The same poem teaches them how through the sights and sounds of Nature they may raise their minds to higher things.

"When you see a crow fly, think of the black and evil devil who is ever ready to destroy you. When you see a wood-pigeon circling in the air, think of your own guardian-angel, gentle and white and sweet. When you behold the sun in the heavens, think of the God who sees all things, who, like the sun, gives warmth and light to the whole world and makes the wild roses grow upon the blue mountains and the perfumed violets in the green forests. Ever before sleep commend yourself to God, that a white angel may come from Heaven and watch over you through all the hours of darkness on to the golden dawn."

Hervé's great anxiety was to help his young scholars to pray regularly and well. Without some training in fixed habits of prayer and recollection, he knew that religious

teaching was of little worth, and that without constant correspondence with Heaven no theological virtue could lastingly flourish. So he taught his boys how to exercise faith and hope and love and sorrow for sin, and to look upon direct communication with the good God as one of life's greatest privileges.

Is it any wonder that in this province of Brittany the Catholic Faith took deep and lasting root?

VI.

As time went on Hervé's pupils grew into men, and many of them became holy priests and monks. What he had taught them when they were boys they were now ready and able to teach others. Indeed as the years rolled by he began to see that he was no longer necessary to the existence of the hermitage-school, and that it might be well if he left it in the hands of a quondam pupil and opened a place of learning in some more neglected district. When a little girl suddenly appeared on the scene and claimed his protection as the daughter of his mother's sister, Hervé bade a sorrowful adieu to his weeping scholars and began to travel eastward.

Hervé saw the hand of Providence in the arrival of the homeless little Kristina. When his faithful white dog died he had not provided himself with another animal friend, and indeed there was no need to do this when so many boys struggled for the privilege of leading him from place to place. Now that he was leaving the hermitage for ever this bright and intelligent little child would act as his guide and assistant.

To build a small religious house was his first purpose, a little monastery in which he would teach the young, and in whose neighborhood he could find a suitable lodging for his niece. Moreover, like the Saxon Aldhelm, he was a great believer in the ministry of song, and knew that he could teach Catholic doctrine very effectively by going about among the people harp in hand and with Christian ballads upon his lips. He could not well be a preacher, for he had not even minor orders; a teacher, and a highly successful one, he had already shown himself to be.

Little as Hervé wished to find himself at the head of a religious community he could not refuse the help of those who wished to join him in his good work, and when in addition to the house and chapel that they soon managed to build they set to work to construct a little cottage of wattled broom for Kristina, the good minstrel was glad at heart. Under a clump of willows beside a pool, and beneath the shadow of the church stood the little maiden's beehive home, and there she lived in great content, having sole charge of the altar-linen and of all the decorations of that little house of God.

Even she is commemorated in the ancient Breton ballads, one of which speaks of her flitting in and out of her little hive of a home, singing and humming like a busy bee, picking the choicest flowers she could find and arranging them for the adornment of the altar. So sweet and sacred were the hymns she sang that while working within the church she did not refrain from chanting, and often when he heard her voice Hervé would make his way into the porch in order to listen and to bless God for the maiden's piety and innocence.

After some years so great became Hervé's fame for wisdom and for sanctity that when a council of Breton Bishops met at Run-brea to condemn and to excommunicate an officer who was treating the poor with great harshness and injustice, our hermit-minstrel was not only invited to be present but was asked to pronounce the sentence.

The scene was a striking one. Barefoot and clad in goat-skin the hermit stood in the centre of seven Bishops and many abbots, each holding a lighted torch. The wrongs done by the oppressor were many and great, and all the prelates were agreed that the Church's ban should be put upon him. So mounting a rock the blind minstrel solemnly recited the sentence and the seven Bishops responded with a triple *Amen.* Every torch was instantly extinguished, and the Council broke up in silence.

For many happy years Hervé continued to teach and to sing both at home and abroad, continuing to share his hermitage-monastery with a number of devoted brethren. And still the holy maiden Kristina continued to live in the little hive-like hut that stood so close to the door of the church. But as the years passed by and Hervé began to grow old and feeble she could no longer lead him abroad. Nor might she visit him in the hermitage. Yet on sunny days he would come to the entrance of the church to give the maiden his blessing, and to encourage her in the solitary and holy life she had so willingly adopted.

One day the hermit-minstrel dragged himself thither for the last time.

"Kristina," he began feebly, "make up a little bed for me before the altar of God. Make it on the hard earth at the feet of Jesus crucified. Give me a stone for bolster

and strew the couch with ashes, for the time of my passing is nigh."

With much weeping the maiden obeyed him. Then she knelt beside him imploring him as a last favor to beg of God that she might follow him, "as the boat follows the ship."

"My child, God is the master," was his reply. "It is He who sows the grain and reaps it when it is ripe."

For three days he lay before the altar, and on the third, surrounded by Bishop and abbots and priests, his holy soul passed to its rest.

And at the same moment Kristina bowed herself upon the feet of her uncle and died. The boat had followed the ship into the Haven of Eternity.

A MIGHTY STRUGGLE.

AMONG the truly great men of the past, Augustine of Hippo holds high place. The man who worships mere intellect cannot but venerate Augustine: the worldly man cannot but be interested in one who for many years was the prince of worldlings. True penitents regard him as their patron: sinners who are yet tied and bound with the chain of sin will, if they are wise, ask for his intercession.

In the year 354 Augustine was born of a pagan father and a Christian mother. His parents were fairly well-to-do but by no means rich, and the father was not slow to see that his boy was possessed of quite exceptional abilities. He first went to school in his native town of Tagaste, not far from Hippo in the African province of Numidia: afterwards he studied grammar, poetry, and rhetoric at Madaura. The father's one ambition was that Augustine should be a great scholar: the mother's daily prayer was that her son should become a great saint.

At the age of sixteen the boy returned to his home, his father wishing him to finish his studies at Carthage. But to the grief of Monica and the lasting detriment of the lad, his father allowed him to spend a whole year in idleness. The reading of bad plays first corrupted his mind; the frequenting of theatres and an excessive indulgence in field sports brought him into bad company and led him into every sort of sin.

In his seventeenth year Augustine went to Carthage. It is a proof of his ardent nature, as well as of his amazing ability, that he threw himself into his studies with such application that he soon held the foremost place in the most famous schools of his country. Yet his vices seemed to grow with his learning. Instead of checking the immoral course upon which he had entered, his studies increased his opportunities and occasions of sinning.

Meanwhile, his holy mother, Monica, prayed. She herself had instructed her boy in the Catholic faith. He was not yet baptized, but he was a catechumen. She had taught him to pray. As was the custom at that particular time, his baptism had been put off, lest the grace of it should be abused. A year after he had been sent to Carthage, his father died after being received into the Church. The widowed Monica still prayed.

Of a certain character in a distinguished work of fiction the author says: "His soul was like some great cathedral organ foully handled in the night by demons." The comparison may well be applied to Augustine. His intellect was colossal. Even non-Catholic authors claim him as one of the greatest writers who ever lived. Great as an orator and a rhetorician, he was still greater as a thinker. His reasoning power was immense. No knowledge came amiss to him. He took up and absorbed almost every form of science.

But if his intellect was strong and powerful, so were his passions. In that amazing book of his *Confessions* he has shown us something of the strife that went on within his soul for so many long years: we know that the battle was Titanic. Good and evil fought desperately for the lasting possession

of that great mind. He was by nature generous and refined. Even in his vices he observed a certain external decency, and his manners were irreproachable. Intensely proud as at this time he was, he carefully refrained from the abusive language in which his companions indulged, and the practical joking so common among the Carthaginian students. To give pain to others afforded him no pleasure. None the less, he lived in open sin and in almost complete forgetfulness of God. But Monica still prayed.

Restless and ill at ease in spite of his scholastic successes, he determined to devote himself to the study of philosophy. He began to have a certain contempt for honors and riches. Learning and wisdom should give him the satisfaction that sensual pleasure could not supply. Yet he made little or no change in his life. The habit of mortal sin was still upon him. Philosophy could show him how to reason concerning his passions: it could not help him to overcome them.

As his knowledge increased, his pride also increased. To his many mortal sins he was to add that of heresy. Hitherto he had been a Christian in name, retaining a certain reverence for Christ and remaining mindful of the teaching of his saintly mother. But long-continued habits of sensuality had blinded his spiritual understanding and greatly weakened his will. To the intense grief of Monica, he joined the sect of the Manichees, remaining in it from his nineteenth to his twenty-eighth year. It was a monstrous and ridiculous heresy, that of Manicheism, and the fall of so great a genius into so foolish and deadly an error was the direct outcome of his pride and impurity. He fell as Solomon fell, as Luther fell, as Henry VIII. fell, as almost every heresiarch has fallen.

A great sorrow fell upon Augustine. His dearest friend and one who had followed him into heresy fell sick and was received back into the Catholic Church. He rallied for a time and Augustine ridiculed his friend's conversion. "If you wish to remain my friend," said the sick man, "you must not make fun of my religion." Soon afterwards he died very happily, and Augustine's grief was terrible. He could do nothing but weep and his life became insupportable. Philosophy could give him no relief: knowledge had no cure for a loss of this kind. Sensual pleasures became a torment. He could no longer remain at Tagaste, where for some years he had conducted a school of grammar and rhetoric, and determined to remove to the great capital of Carthage. Here he gained distinction and applause in public disputations, and secured the principal prizes for oratory and poetry. Time and new friends mitigated his grief.

Soon however the disorderly conduct of the students disgusted him, and he determined to go to Rome. There he fell dangerously ill. Recovering, he began to lecture, the most famous scholars of the day frequenting his schools. Still restless, and annoyed at the knavery of some of his pupils who cheated him of his fees, he sought and obtained a royal appointment, that of Professor of Rhetoric at Milan.

Though St. Monica did not know it, this was the moment for which she had prayed. This was the beginning of the end of Augustine's apostacy and immorality.

To be in the city of Milan without hearing of the holiness and eloquence of its Bishop was impossible. Out of mere curiosity, and to indulge his love of rhetoric, Augustine went to hear St. Ambrose preach. Almost insensibly, Monica's son was impressed. He went to criticize, he remained to

think. The manner of the holy Bishop's sermons attracted the great Rhetorician: the matter of them sank into his heart. Here was a man of God who could reason: the most famous among the Manichees could only talk. Augustine was deeply moved, but he was not yet converted. Yet Monica still prayed.

"The enemy held my will," Augustine afterwards wrote, "and of it he made a chain with which he had fettered me fast. From a perverse will was created wicked desire or lust, and the serving this lust produced a kind of necessity, with which as with certain links fastened one to another I was kept close shackled in this cruel slavery."

If the forming of bad friendships is always a sure occasion of sin, as it certainly is, the making friends with really good people is a special antidote to vice. Augustine began to put himself in the way of holy men, as formerly he had sought out the wicked. Not even then was his conversion immediately assured, but he had taken the first grand step in the right direction. And all this time Monica was praying.

From good friends to good books is an easy step. As a young boy, bad books had seduced Augustine; corrupt plays had led him into wicked company. He now began to read the sublime Epistles of St. Paul and the Lives of the Saints. These writings powerfully affected him, but the struggle still went on. Hell was enraged at the idea of losing a soul so powerful for good or harm, a soul that had served it so faithfully for so many long years. "I was enraged at myself," he says, "that I did not courageously and at once resolve on what my reason convinced me was the good and necessary thing to be done. . . . I shook my chain . . . but could not be released from it."

But he continued to seek out holy men; he went on reading good books. He had already abandoned the Manichean heresy, and his mother had followed him to Milan; for tenderly and devotedly as she loved him, while he remained a heretic she would not live in his house. But she never ceased to pray for him.

Who shall describe her happiness, or his, when the day of his deliverance came? It came in the year 386 when he was thirty-two years old. In great retirement, mother and son lived together, giving themselves to prayer and the practise of a holy life. On the following Easter Eve, Augustine was baptized by St. Ambrose, and in November of the same year St. Monica died. Augustine became a priest and subsequently a Bishop: he remains one of the greatest of God's saints. He died on the 28th of August, 430, in his seventy-seventh year.

ST. BERNARD AND THE KNIGHTS.

A LENTEN STORY.

I.

Gloom of a rigorous Lent,
  And the time of the Passion nigh:
Gay knights on pleasure bent
  Passing Clairvaux by,
Riding to tournament.

II.

Nightfall in a lonely waste:
  Shall they pause at the abbey gate,
Or gallop ahead in haste——
  Hoping for better fate
Than of fasting fare to taste?

III.

Did their angels lead them in?
  Well, an angel met them there,
And from buttery and bin
  Brought forth—not monkish fare—
A bait, their souls to win.

IV.

"I ask of you a truce,"
The holy Bernard cried;
"Do not the Lent abuse,
And the day your Saviour died!"—
But each had his excuse.

V.

"A truce till Lent is o'er?
Nay, for the lists are spread!"
"Then shall I pray the more,"
(The holy Abbot said,
Pausing the wine to pour,

VI.

Pausing to bless the bowls):
"I have begged of God a boon;
Now drink to the health of your souls!
May He grant my favor soon
Whose power the world controls!"

VII.

Anon they rode away,
But the wine had failed to cheer;
The gayest of the gay
Were filled with dread and fear,
The dullest with dismay.

VIII.

Each scanned his fellow's face:
  Lo, each was traced with tears;
Riding at funeral pace
  They told their faults and fears—
First movement of sweet grace.

IX.

"The Abbot o'er his wine
  Hath cast a secret charm;
It is a spell divine!"—
  (The leader, in alarm,
To halt had made the sign.)

X.

Turning, they spur—they fly
  Back to the abbey gate;
'Lighting they kneel and cry,
  "Say not we come too late!
Here would we live—and die!"

LOVERS OF LEARNING.

WHEN that learned Irish monk Tathai settled at Gwent in Monmouthshire, he had twelve pupils, and one cow. And, excepting his books, he had very little else, so that the milk of that one cow formed a very important item in the daily fare of the Doctor and his scholars.

In the Wales of the Sixth Century there were many petty kings, and Gundliew, Prince of Brenockshire, was one of them—a turbulent person who with the help of three hundred of his vassals had stolen the beautiful daughter of a neighboring king and made her his bride. It is to be feared that he stole almost everything that took his fancy; but when his men carried off the poor monk's one cow its lawful owner immediately started to remonstrate with the robber-chief.

Tathai was in bed when the robbers came, but directly he heard of his loss he set out for the castle of King Gundliew, arriving there in an important and, as it turned out, an auspicious hour. That very night a son had been born to the king—who seems to have had some knowledge of, even if he did not practise, the Catholic religion. At any rate he not only restored the stolen cow, but begged the good monk to baptize the newly-born child. Tathai did this very joyfully, giving the babe the name of Cadoc; what is more, he promised that when the boy was old enough he would take charge of his education and up-bringing.

So when little Cadoc (in Celtic the name means *Warlike*) was seven years old he was sent to the monk's school, informing his master that he had already been taught to hunt and fight. The monk was not a professor either of fighting or of hunting, but he at once began to teach the little prince the grammar of Priscian and Donatus. Many other useful and important things did the Irish Doctor teach his pupil. Cadoc not only learnt his Psalter but began to use it. Prayer soon became to him a regular habit and his attachment to his holy master grew deep.

Prince as he was, he showed himself the very willing and affectionate servant of his tutor, lighting the fire, cooking the dinner and serving at table. All these things he did for twelve long years, developing as time went on such a love of study that the monk began to hope Cadoc might some day wear the tonsure instead of his father's crown.

Tathai's hopes were realized. When Cadoc reached the age of nineteen he gladly accepted his tutor's suggestion of a course of higher studies at the famous Irish monastic school at Lismore. After remaining there for some time he returned to Wales in order to join a renowned British rhetorician lately come from Rome, a professor who taught the humanities after the best Roman method.

Unfortunately this learned Doctor was very poor and so many scholars flocked to him that very soon something like famine made itself felt. It seems probable that the learned monk had taken possession of a deserted farm-house, for one day when Cadoc was sitting studying in his cell and trying to forget how very hungry he was, a mouse jumped on the little table and dropped thereon a grain of corn. It is quite possible, as the old chronicler says, that Cadoc did not see

either mouse or grain, but when it returned with a second and a third and continued until seven grains lay before the young student's eyes, he began to reason about the matter. At such a time even one small sack of wheat would be most acceptable, and if only he could follow the mouse he might at least discover some little forgotten or unheard-of store.

The supply may have been miraculous—it is probable that Cadoc and his master thought it was so—but at any rate when they began to search the cellars, to their lasting joy and thankfulness they found an enormous heap of corn—a supply not only sufficient for their own wants but for those of the poor of the neighborhood.

Though he was heir to his father's kingdom, Cadoc had not the smallest intention of becoming King. Having finished his studies he began to lead the life of a solitary, with the resolution of building a monastery and opening a school. As he was an only son he knew that sooner or later he would inherit considerable property. His design was to build a big abbey and open up a great seat of learning and of sanctity.

At that time Wales was filled with forest-land: the wild boar and the wolf were everywhere. From his infancy Cadoc had hunted both, so that while he was looking for a suitable building site the appearance of an enormous boar, white with age, did not scare him. Indeed he was interested in the leaps of the big shaggy creature as it made three bounds one after the other, turning each time to glare at the intruder. Cadoc took up three fallen branches and carefully marked the three spaces cleared by the boar. "Here I will build my church," he said to himself, "here shall be the dormitories, and here the refectory."

In course of time the great Abbey of Llancarvan became a reality. This *Ecclesia Cervorum,* or Church of the Stags, was so named because, says the legend, two stags offered themselves to replace two weary monks who found the work of dragging timber too laborious.

Llancarvan grew into a magnificent centre of usefulness. The labor of clearing the forest and of building the monastery was enormóus; yet directly the monks had finished their domicile they set to work ploughing the land and sowing it with corn. More important still, the abbey developed into a great religious and literary school. First and foremost among its duties were the study of the Bible and the writing out of its various books. Transcription of Latin authors and their commentators followed this, for Cadoc was a scholar of the best type and, like the poet of a later age, next to Divine Wisdom he loved his Virgil. Like Dante, too, he was a poet.

A renowned professor of that day was St. Gildas, well known in Ireland,[1] where he had both studied and lectured, and also at that great seat of learning, Glastonbury. To the monks of this famous abbey he taught the seven liberal arts so successfully that all his pupils became masters.

For one whole year did Gildas the Wise lecture at Llancarvan, desiring no payment but the prayers of his pupils. Moreover, during the same period he copied out the entire book of the Gospels for the use of the abbey whose welcome guest he long remained.

"With the monk came the monastery," says a Protestant

[1] He had taught for years at the great cathedral school of Armagh, founded by St. Patrick, an establishment that might fitly have been called a university. Boys were sent here from every part of Europe, and by the ninth century it boasted 7,000 students. For centuries Ireland was known as the Land of Saints and Scholars.

writer, "with the monastery came the school, and to the gentler spirit a new home was open, a new and noble vocation offered. . . . The sixth century saw schools established in Britain, and the first fruits of learning in the appearance of a native author, the monk Gildas, surnamed the Wise."

Pupils from all parts flocked to Llancarvan, many of them being the sons of kings and chieftains. Like that of every true artist and teacher, Cadoc's motto was *docere cum delectatione,* to make instruction pleasant as well as profitable. Years afterwards his pupils remembered and quoted the little verses and poetical aphorisms they had learnt in the cloister school at Llancarvan. One good prince of North Wales loved to repeat two sentences taught him by Cadoc:

REMEMBER THAT THOU ART A MAN: THERE IS NO KING LIKE HIM WHO IS KING OF HIMSELF.

We may imagine how many prayers and what severe penances Cadoc offered for the conversion of his father and mother. Fierce and rapacious as the King was it is clear that he had a certain respect for the Christian religion. The man who begged for baptism for his son and who gladly permitted him to be brought up and educated by a holy monk was no deliberate hater of righteousness.

But when a man who is dear to God begins to importune Heaven we are never surprised at the result. Cadoc was not content with prayer and penance. To his father's house he sent a holy embassy of three monks who after taking counsel of the lords of the country began to preach repentance in the King's presence. From the first, Cadoc's mother was deeply touched. The preaching of the monks and the

pleading of the Queen soon had the desired effect. "Our son shall now become our father," she said to her husband.

With great joy did Cadoc receive and obey the summons to visit his father and mother. Nothing would content the King and Queen but a public confession of their sins. "Let all my race obey Cadoc with true piety," was Gundliew's decree. No wonder they chanted together the psalm, *Exaudiat te Dominus in die tribulationis.*

The sincerity and thoroughness of their conversions cannot be doubted. Husband and wife both retired from Court and took up their abode in two little cabins at a short distance from each other. There they lived in great peace and content, working with their hands and subsisting on barley bread and cresses. Their saintly son paid them frequent visits, giving them the best of spiritual help and instruction and becoming to them a deeply-venerated spiritual father. As time went on the King and Queen became more and more in love with solitude and with holy things, each of them seeking a deeper retirement and a more complete union with God.

When the day came upon which Gundliew died in the arms of his saintly son, the latter found himself very rich. Cadoc could not rid himself of his inheritance. He could and did use it for the good of the people who now regarded him as their King. For them a Golden Age had indeed begun. At once abbot and prince, Cadoc proved himself the father and protector of the poor, the courageous and determined defender of his people's rights and liberties. Men always knew when they entered the territory of Cadoc, so deep was its peace, so actual its prosperity. Happy indeed were the poor who lived under Cadoc's crook—a sceptre

at once more gentle and more powerful than that held by any mere secular potentate. The truest of true knights was this holy abbot, ever careful to right wrongs, to defend the honour of women, and to protect the patrimony of the poor. Yet it seems probable that he never had recourse to arms, though he maintained at his own cost a hundred knights and a hundred servants. Besides these he supported a hundred priests, and gave education to all the numerous children sent to him.

Fierce were the times and constant the harryings of robber-chieftains, of tyrant kings and their followers. Harp in hand and at the head of fifty monks chanting psalms, Cadoc would go out to meet, and to overcome, a band of marauders. His courage was unbounded, and what these poor pagans atributed to magic was of course nothing but the exercise of that fearless moral force that he, in common with so many holy men, possessed.

Like a mighty deluge came the Saxon invasion. Its horrors and profanations reached even to the banks of the Severn and of the Usk, and the peaceful domains of Cadoc became the theatre of bloodshed and war. As others of his countrymen had done, Cadoc fled to Brittany, taking with him Gildas. They could not be idle. Though content enough to lead the life of solitaries, choosing indeed a cave in the little desert island of Ronech, disciples from the mainland sought them out and compelled them to dispense both human and divine knowledge. Day after day came the boys and young men of Brittany in their poor little boats to sit at the feet of Cadoc and Gildas. Won by their eagerness to learn and delighted with the progress they made, Cadoc actually set to work to construct a sort of bridge from his

island to the coast of France. He had brought with him his Virgil as well as the Sacred Scriptures, and from these two books Cadoc and Gildas taught their pupils.

Where the wild waves lapped the shores of their little island home, walked Cadoc and Gildas. Boisterously blew the wind as friend talked with friend, as one Saint held converse with another. Knowledge was theirs in common; but the bond that bound them together in closest friendship was their love of God and the souls for whom He died.

Close tucked beneath the arm of St. Cadoc was a precious parchment copy of his favorite poet—Virgil. Precious indeed was that hand-written book; for from it Cadoc not only taught the Brittany children—boys who in shallow boats daily left the mainland for Cadoc's island-school—but his affection for it was great, and, with a modern writer, he would have said: "Every Christian loves to walk with Virgil as long as he can, and he will only leave him if he be obliged to leave him at the last extremity, and with tears in his eyes."

On this windy morning there were tears in the eyes of St. Cadoc, tears that were not forthdrawn by the buffeting sea-breeze, or left upon his furrowed cheeks by the spray of the ocean.

"So much I love him," the Scholar-Saint was saying to his scholar-companion, "yet even at this very moment he may perchance be enduring the torments of the damned."

But Gildas, holy man as he was, for a moment forgot himself.

"There can be no *perchance* in Virgil's case," he retorted. "How comes it, Cadoc, that you can dare to doubt as to the damnation of this pagan poet?"

Then curious and startling was the thing that happened! Whether for a moment Cadoc relaxed his hold upon the precious volume, or whether a sudden and violent gust of wind snatched the book from his embrace—who shall say? But even as Gildas spoke, away flew the parchment into the air, only to be swallowed up in the billows of a wind-tossed sea!

Was Cadoc to regard the occurrence as a confirmation of Gildas's judgment—the judgment that seemed to be, and was, so harsh? To the owner of the book it appeared to be so. His sorrow had been great before: he was now plunged into a very agony of grief.

Leaving his friend, Cadoc returned to his cell. Long and earnest was his prayer; firm was his resolution that, until he could feel assured of the fate of one "who sang on earth as the angels sing in Heaven," he would not eat a mouthful of bread nor drink one drop of water.

The tender-hearted Scholar-Saint fell asleep in his cell, and in his sleep he dreamed a Heaven-sent dream. A figure stood by his side, and a gentle voice sounded in his ear.

"*Pray for me, pray for me,*" said the soft, far-away voice; "*pray for me, Cadoc! never be weary of praying for me; I shall yet sing eternally the mercy of the Lord.*"

Cadoc had fallen asleep in deepest grief: he awoke joyful and glad. He rejoiced that the good God had heard his prayer: He was filled with happiness when he reflected that henceforward the soul of the poet that he loved would be helped by his daily supplications. For his view of Virgil was that of many another holy man, and with a nineteenth century poet he would have said:

Not for the glittering splendor of the verse,
O Seer-singer, do we count thee dear;
Not for the prowess of the Ænean spear,
The long brave battling with the Dardan curse;
But for thy human heart's sake we rehearse
Thy deep lines eloquent with hope and fear.

Great was the fame of Cadoc in after-years, and many the legends of him handed down by his peasant scholars. And on winter nights about the fire when they told the story of Cadoc's book and how the wild wind snatched it from his hold and carried it out to the sea they knew so well, they never forgot the story's sequel. For, said they, on the following morning the fishermen who reverenced him and loved to offer him the first-fruits of their toil, brought to his cell a noble salmon. In due time the fish was opened; within it was found the treasured copy of Virgil, lost but the day before!

This, at any rate, is how they told the story, and this is what they believed. What is quite certain is that the huge salmon and the recovered Virgil came out of the same sea, and it is more than possible that they were both secured by the same fisherman.

Though Cadoc was never again to dwell in his own peaceful domain of Llancarvan, after spending some years upon the little island of Ronech he returned to his native land. Much as he dreaded the barbarian Saxons he thought it his duty to live among them if only to comfort and help the victims of their invasion.

And at Weedon in Northamptonshire, while he was engaged in singing Mass a Saxon spear pierced his heart and at the very altar itself he died a blessed martyr.

FROM FOLD TO FOLD.

IN the happy far-off times of which we write, high-born boys did not disdain to keep their father's sheep. Seldom was the son of the noble unwilling to act as shepherd-lad. The heir to a great estate, sometimes indeed the son of a king, would be met leading his father's flocks to pasture or guarding them from the ravages of wolves and bears.

A sturdy, hardy life it was, making for health and beauty and personal bravery; making often enough for learning and piety and for a true estimate of the value of things temporal and eternal. For at that time people were not compelled to consider the cause and cure of a something that in these days is called "Civilization." The extravagances and barbarities, the luxuries and artificialities of our days were happily unknown to men who lived lives that were at once simple and noble, and who died deaths that were not unfrequently blissful and saintly.

If an army of writers devoted their time to the study and the relation of all the benefits bestowed upon the world by the monastic orders, and particularly that of St. Benedict, they would not be able to put on record more than a scanty history of all the known good these holy monks effected. Yet in comparison with the unknown how small is the known! Only the angels of God could write the full and complete history of any Christian nation.

Happily, that which we know is so abundant and leads us

into such a labyrinth of golden deeds that we have little need to speculate upon the value of the unrecorded works and words, prayers and penances of holy men of old.

Valery was the son of a gentleman of Auvergne. In a strangely varied district he kept his father's sheep—a region of old volcanic caves and exhausted craters now filled with water and forming big circular pools. Yet could Valery lift his eyes to the blue hills and venture into the deep solitude of vast pine forests, finding abundant pasture for his sheep, and learning little by little to love the lonely shepherd life that brought him, as it were, face to face with the Creator.

Like many a lad of his own time, and of later times, he soon began to experience great longings for—he knew not what. The heart of the boy became restless. Big desires possessed him—desires of knowing and of loving the Author of all the grandeur that daily greeted his sight. Above all things he desired a knowledge of letters, since this would open out to him all the beauty of the Book of Nature and the Book of the Gospels.

Now and then when he was going home to his father's house after a day's shepherding he would meet boys of his acquaintance returning from the monastery school. Scarcely could he conceal his envy as he reflected that some of these young nobles and peasants were not older than himself; yet easily could they read the written word and recite the whole of that grand primer of ancient times, the first serious task every little schoolboy applied himself to, the glorious book of a hundred and fifty poems, many of them written by a king who had once been a shepherd-boy.

But Valery was still very young, and it may be that his father thought there would be ample time for study in the near future. Then the fresh open-air life was so good for the child, already grown ruddy and strong and sturdy. Yet in the course of a day's shepherding there were always some unoccupied hours, and Valery's father made no objection to his son carrying a tablet and style and, since he already knew his alphabet, trying to teach himself how to read and write.

So quite alone and unaided Valery began to trace his letters on the waxen tablet. As his sheep browsed peacefully on the mountain-side Valery made syllables of letters and words of syllables. Not content with learning to read and write the boy now began to study the Latin grammar. One thing he greatly desired and that was to be able to read, and reading to learn by heart, the hymns of the Shepherd-King.

The multiplication of books has meant—certainly the diffusion of knowledge, but also—the weakening of memory. That a child should learn by heart the entire Psalter, and acquire it not merely as a lesson by heart sooner or later to be forgotten, but in order to say and to sing every syllable of it correctly, seems to us something of a feat; yet for hundreds of years the task was looked upon as a very elementary one and as much a matter of course as the learning of an alphabet. Moreover, in some cases it was done with comparative quickness. The little boy Lananus, whose good mother brought him to St. Patrick—who asked St. Cassan to take charge of and to instruct him—learned the whole of David's Psalms in a fortnight. Adalbert of Prague learned his Psalter before he was sent to school.

How long this task may have occupied Valery the shep-

herd-boy of Auvergne we do not know; but it is certain that as soon as he could read, and while he kept his sheep, he committed to memory the entire collection of the sacred songs that begin with *Beatus vir* and end with *Laudate Dominum in sanctis.*

What a precious possession, for either man or boy! Valery's delight and thankfulness knew no bounds. Wherever he went he could build himself a spiritual temple. Every tree became to him a choir-stall; the mountain-side served him for an oratory; the deep valley was his minster. Going out from home or returning at night-fall he could chant and sing. In the heat of noontide he could lift heart and voice to God. Whatever his mood might be this wonderful Psalter supplied him with the words he needed.

Valery was happier than a regiment of Kings. The dearest desire of his heart had been satisfied. The Church's big book of prayers was his—more really and more intimately than if he owned the beautifully written Psalter lent to him by the Abbot of St. Antony's. Prayer was now no difficulty to the boy. In one psalm or another the deepest sentiments of his heart could always find expression. They were his very own, these canticles of praise and of petition, these hymns of joy and of sorrow, these songs of hope and of love.

Is it any wonder if as one day he chanted the words, *Blessed is he whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thee: He shall dwell in Thy courts*—is it any wonder if he began to think longingly of the Abbey of St. Antony where his uncle was a monk—chosen and taken by God to dwell in His courts? Valery was still young, and to his father and mother he was exceedingly dear. For years, perhaps, they

had noticed the bent of his mind, and had seen that his affections were set upon things both high and holy. To lose him was terrible, but they did not oppose his wish to be a monk. And, after all, he was too sweet and gentle, too modest and loving to find happiness in a wild lawless world, or satisfaction in an inheritance of flocks and herds.

So on a day that was filled to overflowing with strangely-mingled joy and sorrow, Valery passed into the silent life of hard study and manual labor and deep prayer. As yet he did not go far from home—the Auvergne that was now, and always would be, dear to him. Besides, as we have said, his own uncle was at St. Antony's, and it was the most natural thing in the world that Valery should begin his religious apprenticeship among the monks he had so long regarded with affectionate respect.

Here at any rate he spent the time of his noviceship and the years of his early boyhood, giving promise of both learning and goodness. But in a year or two he went on to the monastery of St. Aunacharius at Auxerre.

However, the France of those times was full of the report of the wonderful doings of St. Columbanus, and the big abbey of Luxeuil was attracting to its schools students from every land. The fame of the great Irish Abbot reached the ears of Valery and he began to long to number himself among the monks at Luxeuil.

Staff in hand, and with one companion named Bobbo, Valery left Auxerre and after a toilsome pilgrimage reached that wonderful land of pine forest and blue mountains which reminded him strongly of his own beloved Auvergne.

The novices of Luxeuil had a garden that was all their own, and of this the holy Abbot Columbanus made Valery

the keeper. If the monks had succeeded in nothing but the teaching of the great lesson of the dignity of labour they would have justified their existence; in reality they taught their pupils everything that it is good for boy or man to know. Valery had come to this far-famed monastery primarily to pray and to study: he had also come to work with his hands. And how well he tended his enclosed garden is a matter of history.

So hard did he labour with spade and fork that almost as if by miracle insects and worms, stones and weeds, seemed to be foreign to his garden. To vegetables and to flowers he gave equal care. Not by bread alone do men live, but by every word that is found in God's big book of nature, as well as in that precious legacy of His written word. Brother Valery loved everything that God had made, and so assiduously did he cultivate sweet-smelling herbs and every kind of perfumed blossom, that what the poet has recorded of Arthur's young knight Pelleas is literally true of Valery:

> . . . . the high doors
> Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a youth,
> Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
> Past, and the sunshine came along with him.

For when one day Valery entered the great chapter-hall where the Abbot was about to explain the Sacred Scriptures, the odour of fragrant flowers passed in with him, and before all the assembled monks Columbanus cried out to the gardener-Brother, "It is thou, my well-beloved, who art the true abbot and lord of this monastery."

In kitchen and refectory alike the vegetables from the novices' garden were in high repute. Ever wholesome and sweet-flavoured, said the Brother Cook, were the cabbages

and beans grown by Valery; ever pleasant to sight and taste, said the hard-faring monks, were the fruits of the earth that seemed to be endowed with a particular benediction through the prayerful toil of Valery.

Happy were the years spent under the saintly rule of Columbanus, so happy, indeed, and with such practise of solid virtue on the part of the two hundred and twenty monks, that the devil became enraged with envy and began to look about him for some means to destroy the blissfulness of such holy living. In the person of a woman Satan found a ready tool. Queen Brunehault smote the holy shepherd and, scattering the entire flock, gave the abbey to seculars. Happily the havoc wrought by this she-wolf, as she was called, and her infamous grandson, the King of Burgundy, was ultimately repaired.

In this work of reparation Valery was prominent. Joining himself to a saintly Father named Eustace he began to collect the scattered brethren; soon they had the joy of taking possession of the fold that was so dear to them, though they never succeeded in recalling their holy Abbot.

Content as Valery was to live in monastic peace, the heathenish state of some parts of France caused him and a brother named Waldelin much grief, and soon with the consent of the Bishop of Amiens and King Clothair III, the two monks started on a missionary expedition to Leuconay near the mouth of the Somme. Here they built for themselves a small hermitage and some cells. Little by little other zealous men joined them, and much encouraged by their Bishop, who always came to them for the whole of Lent, a flourishing monastery was established. Its good influence was soon felt throughout the entire district, and what

had been one of the fastnesses of Satan now became an earthly Paradise.

Here Valery was to live and to die, honoured and loved as much by his flock as by his own religious brethren. Feared too, as well as loved; for it was firmly believed that he could read the thoughts of the heart. Had he not openly rebuked a man who had come to receive Holy Communion after drinking a measure of wine? When Father Valery's eyes rested upon the boy who brought loaves and some wine his mother had sent as an offering to the monastery church, did he not tremble as Father Valery said, "My child, you have eaten of the bread offered to God, have you not? On your way hither did you not drink a quantity of the wine?"

When Valery broke the pagan images and pulled down little heathen shrines, angry as some of the yet unconverted showed themselves, they dared not lay hand upon the holy man or upon his little acolyte.

Yet the fowls of the air had no fear of Valery's keen and flashing eye. The wild birds not only came and fed from his hand, but would stand on it and permit him to stroke their feathers. So well they recognized him and so much they sought him that they would fly into the refectory, well knowing that they would never be driven forth and that no serving monk would harm them. Yet the master-passion of his heart was a great love for the poor and the afflicted, and a sentence constantly upon his lips was: "The more cheerfully we give to those who are in distress, the more readily will God give us what we ask of Him."

Rose-red grew the face of the holy old man as he wandered about the hills of his last resting-place on earth—rose-

red with the fire of the love of God which was ever newly kindled when he looked upon and admired the works of the Creator. Long had he read and pondered upon the ever open pages of the book of Nature. As a little shepherd-lad on the hills of Auvergne he had looked upon the blue mountains and the shining pools set like mirrors in the great stretches of green pasture, and he had found them very good. Long before he could read the written letters upon the borrowed Psalter—nay before he knew the meaning of the symbols that make up the alphabet, he had gazed upon created beauty with the eye of a Christian poet, and it had led his soul to dwell with ever-increasing fondness upon the Uncreated Beauty of the Divinity.

One Saturday he walked out with a company of his monks, and as they climbed a little hill that he had always loved and frequented he paused at the foot of a certain tree and said to his brethren very sweetly: "My children, remember that here is the spot I have chosen for my burial."

And on the following day, the 12th of December, 622, the Lord's own day of rejoicing, the holy man fell asleep and passed into his everlasting rest.

Like so many other holy monks he gave his name to the town of which his abbey was the beginning. St. Valery-sur-Somme was one of the most prosperous ports of the Channel during the middle ages. Both Hugh Capet and William the Conqueror had a great regard for the memory of St. Valery.

FROBERT THE SIMPLE.

I.

AT HOME.

FROBERT'S mother was blind. But for her consolation God sent her Frobert, a child of gentleness and of compassionateness. Scarcely could a mother have been loved more tenderly. Eyes to the blind indeed was Frobert, and a foot to the lame.

That this good mother should receive her sight was the daily prayer of the child. Than this he had no other temporal blessing to ask of Heaven. He was not as other children. By nature he was gentle and loving, and his mother's affliction had kept him by her side, making him thoughtful beyond his years, and causing him to move about gently, to speak softly. Making him prayerful too—beyond the wont of children who have lately come to the use of reason. And the prayerfulness made him holy.

So Frobert lived his child-life devoted to his mother for her own sake and for God's sake: devoted to God above all things.

It was no wonder that he shrank from the rough play of the street, and that he cared so little for what gives pleasure to the average child. In the eyes of the boisterous and the rough he was a simpleton. They did not understand that

nature, and the circumstances of his life, had made him gentle and gracious, and that grace acting upon nature had made him saintly. To the rough and the rude he was Frobert the Simpleton: to his poor blind mother he was the very joy of life.

He lived in the lone west country of France where the mountains of the Vosges begin their formidable range, and where the heavy snows of winter are now followed with a wealth of wild cherry blossom that keeps the hills white with flowers when they cease to be white with snow. And he lived in the far-off times of the seventh century when England had just been converted, and when our country had no church or religious house comparable with that Abbey of Luxeuil which was the glory of the neighborhood in which Frobert lived.

A wild period it certainly was, although the light of Faith was burning brightly enough in western France; a wild country, too, where the winter lasted long, and the wolves ran through the streets of the little towns at the foot of the Vosges. A perilous journey was it to the Bishop's school, sometimes an impossible one; but for all his gentleness the boy was hardy and courageous, and indeed his goodness and purity made him brave. An apt scholar, too, he showed himself, with a special taste for all holy learning and a very marked preference for the sacred books. Doubtless even as a young boy the Bishop of Troyes had heard of his goodness and his dogged application to his work, for it was to the prelate's own school that Frobert was sent.

But to leave the poor blind mother day by day was a sore trial to the boy, and he determined that if earnest and persistent prayer could bring about a miracle, as indeed it had

so often done, that prayer should not be wanting. So day by day Frobert applied himself to his work with all the energy he possessed: day by day he implored the good God to look with pity upon his mother's affliction and to restore her sight. For how long he prayed we are not told.

But on a day never to be forgotten, while he was standing by the loving woman's side receiving the motherly caresses she so often bestowed upon him—suddenly he threw his arms about her and tenderly kissed her sightless eyes. Then full of confidence in the power and pity of Jesus Christ, who once gave sight to the blind, Frobert made the sign of the Cross on his mother's eyes, and, in a paroxysm of prayer, implored the help of Heaven. The petition of this pure-souled child was heard. His mother received her sight.

Frobert was the holy child of a holy mother. What could she offer to God in thanksgiving for one of the greatest temporal favors it is possible for a human being to receive? Well, just at that particular time, God asked for no great sacrifice in return: the day came, however, when He demanded nothing less than the son she loved so fondly. For, as time went on, it became more and more clear that Frobert had a call to the life of religion. No greater sacrifice could have been asked of this good mother, a woman poor in this world's goods and, as far as we know, having no other son to work for her; yet freely and generously she gave her child to God.

II.

IN THE CLOISTER.

So the doors of the great Abbey of Luxeuil were opened to Frobert—still a boy of tender years. Both for mother

and son the wrench was a terrible one. Frobert had need now of all the courage which is ever the outcome of genuine piety. He had left a poor but a very happy home, and a mother who loved him tenderly, to live in a great monastery where there were six hundred monks, besides a great band of boy-pupils, chiefly the sons of French nobles. Founded only some thirty years or so before the birth of Frobert, by that amazing and intrepid Irish missionary, St. Columban, the Abbey of Luxeuil was at this time the very head and centre of all intellectual life in France. It was protected by her kings, and it gave the Church her bishops. From its walls went forth many a band of holy monks to preach the faith in dark and savage places, and many were the religious houses that sprang from it and followed the Columban Rule. Not less than one hundred and five monasteries were founded by these disciples of St. Columban in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy.

Beautiful and holy as the life was at Luxeuil, we can well understand the bewilderment of Frobert when he first found himself walking its crowded cloisters. Though he had done well at the Bishop's school and gave promise of becoming a scholar, he seems to have entered this severe Order as a lay-brother. Severe indeed was the Rule as laid down by St. Columban; but this great man had passed away, and the existing Abbot appears to have been as kind and sympathetic as he was zealous and holy. Yet the young novice must have shuddered when he heard of the painful penances accepted by his brothers for what seem to us very trifling faults: the six lashes inflicted upon those who did not answer *Amen* at grace; the same for talking in the refectory or for smiling in church; the fifty lashes for such greater faults as wilful

disobedience and insubordination. Nay, there were offences for which the penance was two hundred strokes, and it would be slight consolation to a boy to know that only twenty-five were ever administered at one time.

But we must remember that St. Columban had had to deal with a great body of men, many of whom were barely civilized; men who had everything to unlearn and much to learn; nor must we forget that we are reading of a period more than three hundred years before the Norman Conquest.

The marvel is that so many of these monks were such holy and learned men; that they were both there is abundant and clear historical proof. But we need not be surprised if we find that there was a brother here and there not quite so thoughtful and considerate as we might expect a monk to be. Frobert was simple with the beautiful simplicity that belongs to some characters, and which seems to have very little to do with the absence of intelligence. He was one of those lovable people that men are inclined to laugh at—not by any means in an unkindly way, but because their sense of humor is greater than that of their victim. Sometimes indeed the laughter is altogether of a kindly nature and, like Dickens's delightful Tom Pinch, the person who provoked it is greatly loved.

Frobert was, in some respects, a Tom Pinch of the seventh century. To begin with, he was very ignorant of the world of men, and never suspected that there were people who would take advantage of his ignorance. Even the world of the cloister was to him a new and a surprising world, and he saw and heard of many things the very names of which he did not know.

Perhaps he had already made some amusing mistakes, and

was getting a reputation for the comical little errors that provoke laughter; anyhow, he was one day made the subject of a very thoughtless practical joke.

There was a visitor in the abbey at that time, a certain religious man named Tuedolin, who had come to Luxeuil for purposes of study, and Brother Frobert was appointed to attend upon him. The goodness of his young servant was, no doubt, fully appreciated by the stranger; yet he could not, or rather did not, resist the temptation to have a little fun at Frobert's expense. Perhaps we shall be inclined to smile when we are told that Frobert did not know a pair of compasses when he saw them; but again we must remember the period, and the fact that the school apparatus of that time was very primitive.

Tuedolin, then, sent the boy to another monk to ask for a pair of compasses, and the brother to whom the novice was sent, suspecting the nature of the errand, took up a couple of stones from a hand-mill that was lying near, and put them round Frobert's neck. Obediently enough the boy tried to carry the "compasses" to Tuedolin's cell, though the weight of them was almost more than he could support. Staggering along the cloister, and trying to ease the weight upon his neck by holding the stones in his hands, Frobert suddenly came face to face with his Abbot. In sheer compassion the Superior stopped to ask the lad where he was going. Very simply, Frobert explained that he was taking "a pair of compasses" to the visitor—who wanted them for literary purposes. Removing the mill-stones from the boy's neck, the Abbot burst into tears, grieved to the heart that the simple lad should have been made a fool of by those who had every opportunity of knowing his goodness.

The rebuke administered to Tuedolin and the other monk was a sharp one, and it is very unlikely that they ever played any other practical joke upon Frobert.

But in spite of this little matter and the undoubted hardness of the life, the young novice was entirely happy. For he possessed within himself the secret of happiness—a pure heart and a clear conscience. Moreover, he knew that he had been called to this holy state of life and that he was doing the will of God in all things.

III.

AT THE BISHOP'S HOUSE.

Being beloved of God it was necessary that Frobert should be tried, and the trial came to him in a particularly unwelcome form. How long he had been at the abbey when his old friend the Bishop of Troyes called him from the cloister, we are not told, but we may be sure that the boy had finished the term of his noviceship, and was looking forward to a peaceful if toilsome life within the dearly-loved walls of Luxeuil.

But the good Bishop had not forgotten the gentle and modest little lad who had once sat in the Cathedral School. The prelate liked to have holy people about him; moreover, he saw great possibilities in this young peasant-boy.

So, much as it cost him, Frobert willingly obeyed, and passed from the peaceful cloister to the house of the Bishop in the city of Troyes. But he did not cease to live as a monk. Hard as he found it to keep his Rule and to follow the daily practises of his dear Order amid his new surroundings, he relaxed nothing in the austere mode of living

prescribed by St. Columban. The Bishop's servants did not approve of his austerities, and when Lent came and Frobert ate nothing until after sunset, they became downright angry. Then some of them started a story that the young monk was a humbug and that his pretense of fasting till evening was all nonsense. They said this to the Bishop, adding that Brother Frobert kept a supply of food in his chamber and ate secretly.

Probably the Bishop did not believe them, but he thought it only right to submit Frobert to some little test. So, to the lad's surprise, his lordship told him that he could change his room and move into a little cell in the Cathedral tower. Frobert was delighted, for he was now somewhat nearer to God's altar, and the tower-chamber, though rather cold and desolate, was very quiet and peaceful. But he could not for some time understand why the Bishop so constantly looked in upon him—at meal-times, for example, and indeed at all sorts of extraordinary hours. However, his lordship was soon satisfied that Frobert had no store of provisions and that his Lenten fast was no pretense.

So, somewhat to his regret, Frobert left his chamber in the tower—only to find that the Bishop wished him to prepare himself for Sacred Orders.

IV.

IN AFTER YEARS.

Frobert's great wish was to be hidden and unknown, but it seems as though the more he withdrew himself from public life the more he was sought after. He could not even escape the notice of the Emperor. Not only in the city of Troyes,

but throughout the land the fame of his holiness and his miracles began to spread. The good Bishop soon saw that Almighty God had some great work for the young monk to do. This work was nothing less than the founding of a new monastery. On land given to him for the purpose by Clovis II. Frobert built the famous monastery of La Celle.

Thus the monk who had once been regarded as a simpleton became one of the most remarkable Abbots of his time, and ruled a community largely made up of scholars. For many long years he lived a holy and a happy life at La Celle, spending his last days in the building of a handsome church. His strength seems to have lasted as long as the church was in progress: when it was finished he knew that he had not long to live.

It was near Christmas, and the Abbot's great desire was to see the church consecrated on the Feast of the Nativity. But the Bishop could not well leave his Cathedral on so great a day, and Frobert prayed earnestly that his life might be prolonged until the octave-day of Christmas. His prayer was answered. When on the 1st of January the building had been solemnly dedicated to God, quietly and happily the Abbot passed away.

SHEER PLUCK.

I.

IF the world has an esteem for any particular virtue, that virtue is fortitude. Under the name of *pluck* every man admires this quality and loves to see it in action. It appeals to men of every class; to the old as much as to the young; to women as well as to men. A lack of this virtue is peculiarly humiliating both to man and boy: possession of it in any uncommon degree raises the individual to the rank of a hero.

St. Thomas tells us that we may regard fortitude in two ways: (1) As meaning a certain firmness of mind and purpose: (2) as signifying firmness in the enduring and resisting of those difficulties in which it is hardest to have firmness.

Fortitude, then, is a certain moral strength or courage—unyielding courage in the endurance of pain and adversity. With physical or structural strength it has nothing to do. The use of the Latin *fortitude* in connection with bodily strength is very rare; its employment in English in the same sense is said to be obsolete.

As one of the four cardinal virtues it is therefore strength or firmness of mind or soul which enables a person to do and to dare, to suffer and to endure without murmurs or complaint or depression. It is the foundation of, the source

and basis of, all courage and bravery, of all patience in suffering, of all forbearance and magnanimity. In one word, it is *Manliness.*

"The principal act of fortitude is *endurance,*" says St. Thomas, and he defines endurance as "the remaining steady and unflinching in dangers, rather than attacking." Endurance is more difficult than taking the offensive, he tells us. To attack another supposes that we have the upper hand; if we are attacked, the opponent is probably the stronger. Again, endurance supposes a long time, but one may attack by a sudden movement. "It is harder to remain long immovable than with a sudden motion to move forward to an arduous task."

To prove that mere physical courage is vastly inferior to fortitude is unnecessary: the task would be like the flogging of a dead ass. Perhaps only a very small boy, or a very foolish man, has ever ventured to deny that the ruling of one's self is a harder and braver thing than the taking of a strong city. Nevertheless, in the minds of many there is a lamentable tendency to confuse animal courage with moral bravery, and to prefer a spirit of mere brutal combativeness to that grand endurance of pain and suffering which can alone raise a man to the rank of the truly heroic.

Disgusted with a life-long reading of the lives of men who became less heroic the more he knew of them, Edward Fitzgerald exclaimed: "I think there is but one Hero: and that is the Maker of Heroes." We may applaud this sentiment even while we point out that if the Incarnate God is the Maker of heroes, those heroes have lived or are living. "Know you not that the Saints shall judge this world?" asks St. Paul of the Corinthians; and he reminds the Thessalon-

ians of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints," and again, that "He shall come to be glorified in His saints."

There never was a saint who was not also a hero; but of how few of those heroes, so-called, whose names are honoured by the world, can we say that they were in any degree saintly?

To set forth the lives of the Saints of God merely as so many examples of fortitude, as so many models of pluck, would be an easy and a grateful task. But it would scarcely give us a complete portrait of these true heroes of earth and heaven. For the topmost thing about them is—their love of God above all things, their love of the neighbour for God's sake. Self-love, the universal vice—selfishness in every form—self-interest, self-pity, self-complacency, self-conceit, self-seeking, self-enjoyment, self-pleasing, self-consciousness, self-exaltation, self-deceit, self-will, self-esteem, self-indulgence—each and every one of these bad qualities was met and fought and done to death by the Saints of God. They are saints just because they were not lovers of self. They were canonized not so much because of the external wonders they wrought, nor because of the miracles they performed, but precisely because they loved God and their neighbor in a degree that was in every sense of the word heroic.

II.

Among the many early saints who are renowned for their courage, the young Simeon Stylites is a magnificent example.

Born in the year 390, he lived in Sisan, a little town in Cilicia on the borders of Syria. His father was a poor shep-

herd, and like Joseph and David the boy looked after his father's sheep. One day in the depth of winter when it was impossible to lead the sheep to pasture, the young Simeon went to assist at the Offices of the Church. Whether he heard the Beatitudes read and commented upon for the first time we are not told; but it is certain that their meaning came home to him that day with great force. *Blessed are they that mourn: Blessed are the clean of heart*—these in particular struck the thirteen-year-old boy and made him thoughtful. He could not be happy until he had asked a certain old man to expound the meaning of these moving words of Christ, and when he understood them he begged to be told how the promised blessedness could be obtained. Doubtless it was pointed out to him that every Christian had the choice of two roads—that of the precepts and that of the counsels. One was harder and narrower and more toilsome than the other, but it was safer and better for those who were called by God to enter upon it and was for them the high road to happiness and to perfection.

Then Simeon began to pray, and his prayer was no hurried recital of an Our Father or a Hail Mary. He was brave and fearless—this young shepherd lad, and he was determined to listen to the voice of God. In secret he prayed as though life itself depended upon his prayer. Prostrate on the ground he implored God to guide and enlighten him.

Exhausted, perhaps, by the length and vehemence of his prayer, he fell asleep, and in his sleep he was permitted to see a vision.

The lad dreamed that he was digging—digging deeply for the foundations of a house. Toiling hard, he was compelled to stop now and then in order to take breath. Four times,

he afterwards said, did he rest for an instant, and each time he distinctly heard a voice calling to him and saying—"*Dig Deeper!*" At length he was told to cease. The pit was deep enough for the foundations of whatever structure he cared to raise upon it.

"The event," says an ancient writer, "verified the prediction. The after-life of this wonderful lad was so superior to nature that it might well require the deepest possible foundation of humility and fervor."

Not far from his father's house there was a monastery under the care of a holy abbot named Timothy. Rising from sleep Simeon betook himself to the gate of this religious house. Though not the only way by which perfection may be reached, the boy knew that the monastic life was the best and readiest means of attaining such an end. Yet his humility did not permit him to ask for the religious habit. To be the drudge of the servants of the servants of God was his only aspiration at this time. For several days and nights he lay prostrate at the gate without taking either food or drink, begging that he might be admitted as the lowest of the hired servants of the Abbot. His request was eventually granted, and for four months with great fervor and affection he undertook the meanest offices of the abbey.

It would almost appear that during these months he was regarded as a novice—at any rate as a postulant, for it is expressly said of him that he undertook that first task of a novice—not imposed in primitive times only, but still enjoined in some of the ancient religious orders—the learning by heart of the one hundred and fifty psalms of David. What a precious possession for a young mind! The entire psalter committed to memory—every one of those priceless

hymns ready to pass from mind to lips at any moment of the day or night!

In this monastery Simeon remained for two years, ever advancing in love and humility and gaining the esteem and good-will of his older religious brethren.

Whether the boy-monk now wished to place himself at a greater distance from home or parents, or whether he wished to join a stricter community, we are not told; but at the age of fifteen Simeon passed to the Monastery of Heliodorus, an abbot of great sanctity, who had passed sixty-two of the sixty-five years of his life in this community.

It is now that the lad began that wonderful life of mortification which in an age and in a part of the world where penance and fasting were very ordinary matter-of-fact occurrences, made Simeon Stylites renowned. We must not forget who and what he was. As a poor shepherd boy he had lived a simple open-air life, and his food had always been the food of the poor. Doubtless his frame was a sturdy one and his constitution vigorous and healthy. We know not what his particular reason may have been for eating but once a week. We know nothing of his interior trials and temptations. We know, too, that fasting is but a means to an end, and that perfection does not consist in afflicting the body. No one knew this better than Simeon himself, but he loved God above all things and he wanted to prove his love. Let it be frankly admitted that at this time of his life he made mistakes; but better than all the penances and fastings and mortifications was the obedience he showed to his Superior. Heliodorus forbade him to fast for so long a time, and Simeon at once yielded—only however to fall into an indiscretion of another kind.

III.

It may be that fierce temptations afflicted the pure soul of this growing boy, and that he was heroically determined to overcome them at any cost. Round and round his body next to the skin he bound a rough, thick well-rope, made of the big, hard-twisted leaves of the palm-tree. He did this unknown to his Superior or to any of his brethren. That this instrument of penance caused him great suffering is certain. The rope began to eat into his flesh and a terrible abscess was the result. A physician had to be called in to cut the cords. He was compelled to make incisions in the flesh, and these nearly cost the patient his life. For three days liquids had to be applied to soften the shreds of clothing that clung to the wound, and it is said that for some time the boy lay as though he were dead. But he recovered—only to be dismissed from the monastery.

Let this not be forgotten. Simeon had erred, and the error cost him very dearly. His Abbot regarded such conduct as a dangerous singularity, prejudicial to true religious discipline, and he would have none of it. And, remember, this Abbot was a man of singular holiness, and one who for many years had led a life of great mortification.

It is not clear for how long a time Simeon remained under the care of Abbot Helidorous, but at the time of his dismissal the Saint was, probably, only a boy. Sadly wandering away from the monastery, he came in contact with a holy priest named Bassus, and at the foot of Mount Telnescin, or Thelanissa, he began to lead the life of a hermit. The Abbot Bassus—he had two hundred monks in his charge—became Simeon's director.

The boy was determined now to act only under obedience, and at the beginning of Lent when he asked permission to abstain from all food and drink during the entire forty days, the Abbot gave him ten loaves of bread and a supply of water, charging him to eat if he found it necessary. Coming to him at Easter with the Most Blessed Sacrament, Bassus found the young hermit stretched upon the ground, apparently dead. The loaves and the water had not been touched. Reviving him a little by moistening his lips with a sponge, the priest gave him Holy Communion. A little later Simeon broke his fast upon lettuce leaves and herbs.

In this hermitage he spent three years, and then built for himself at the top of the mountain—not a hut, not even a shed, but a sort of wall, a roofless screen that afforded him little or no shelter from the cold of the mountain top. Then he had an iron ring riveted round his right leg and connected by a great chain to the rock upon which he lived. Among those who visited him at this time was Meletius, vicar of the Patriarch of Antioch, who told him that a firm will and the grace of God would keep him to his purpose without the wearing of a fetter. At once the obedient Simeon sent for a smith and had the shackle removed.

And now the Saint's troubles began. Day after day the mountain was thronged with the crowds who came to him to be cured of their diseases, to listen to his exhortations, or to receive his blessing. The distraction caused by these visits, to a man whose only longing was to be alone with God, may be imagined.

For the next thirty-seven years of his life he lived on pillars, beginning with a column of stone six cubits high. After four years he raised a second one of twelve cubits.

Three years later he built another one, twenty-two cubits in height, and remained upon it for ten years. But for the last twenty years of his life he lived upon a pillar built for him by the people—a column that reached the height of forty cubits![1] Thus he was to be known in history as the Stylites, from the Greek *stylos,* a pillar.

Tennyson's poem on the Saint is known to all English-speaking readers. It is in many respects an exceedingly fine piece of versification, but it gives us an absurdly imperfect portrait of St. Simeon. Like most Protestant readers and perhaps a few unthinking Catholic ones, Lord Tennyson misses the secret of the hermit's sanctity, and the leading characteristic of the Saint's life. Some portions of the long soliloquy that the poet puts into Simeon's mouth are impossible; yet the late Laureate had evidently studied his subject with care and tried to treat it sympathetically.

The *refrain* of this poetical monologue is indeed exactly what we might expect from a saint—"Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin." This was undoubtedly the burden of St. Simeon's prayer; but a poet who could put the following into the mouth of Stylites proves that he read the lives of the saints to little purpose:

> O Jesus, if Thou wilt not save my soul,
> Who may be saved? Who is it may be saved?
> Who may be made a saint, if I fail here?

Nor would Simeon in his prayer make a catalogue of the penances he had practised since his boyhood:

> For not alone this pillar-punishment.
> Not this alone I bore: but while I lived
> In the white convent down the valley there,

[1] Dr. Arbuthnot reckons the Roman cubit at $17\frac{4}{10}$ inches.

For many weeks about my loins I wore
The ropes that hauled the buckets from the well,
Twisted as tight as I could knot the noose;
And spoke not of it to a single soul,
Until the ulcer, eating through my skin,
Betrayed my secret penance, so that all
My brethren marvell'd greatly. More than this
I bore, whereof, O God, Thou knowest all.

We have already pointed out that for this particular indiscretion the young monk was dismissed from his "white convent," and we may be quite sure that afterwards he bitterly regretted the "not speaking to a single soul" of such self-inflicted punishment. Even though he might be conscious of having had a good intention in the matter, he would certainly not look back upon it with complacency, or offer to Almighty God a singularity that, for the time at least, deprived him of his vocation. Tennyson was a great poet, and there are some wonderful lines in his *St. Simeon Stylites;* but the Laureate's grasp of the principles of Catholic faith and practise was always a very loose one.

It can never be repeated too often that mortification is not in itself sanctity; that in itself it is not the quality that raises a man to the altars of the Church. Sometimes it is a contributing cause to holiness of life; sometimes it is the natural effect of an overpowering love of God. Such mortifications as these of the Stylites are not only not imitable, but they are not the actions that make him dear to the Catholic heart. That his penances were truly heroic, and that as an example of fortitude he is wonderful, even among the saints, may be granted; but his claim upon our love and veneration comes precisely through his ready obedience, his profound humility, and his perfect charity.

Bidden to descend from his pillar he at once complies.

Twice every day he preached to the people, and his influence for good seems to have been almost unbounded. Not merely Christians but pagans and barbarians crowded to hear him. We read of an entire nation being converted to the Faith through his sermons and miracles. Persians, Armenians, and Iberians, made long pilgrimages to hear him: emperors, kings and queens came to consult him. The Empress Eudoxia was rescued by him from the heresy of Eutychus: the Emperor Marcian came to him disguised as a poor pilgrim. Solitary as he was, St. Simeon did not live for himself alone.[1]

[1] The following passage from the pen of a Protestant writer of the life of St. Simeon, is of interest:

"The fame of the wondrous austerities of this man wrought upon the wild Arab tribes, and effected what no missionaries had been able, as yet, to perform. No doubt the fearful severities exercised by Simeon, on himself, are startling and even shocking. But the Spirit of God breathes where He wills, and thou canst not tell whence He cometh and whither He goeth. What but the divine Spirit could have caught that young boy's soul away from keeping sheep, and looking forward to the enjoyment of youth and precipitated it into this course, so contrary to flesh and blood? Theodoret says, that as kings change the impression of their coins, sometimes stamping them with the image of lions, sometimes of stars, sometimes of angels, so the divine Monarch produces different marks of sanctity at different periods, and at each period He calls forth these virtues, or characters He needs for a particular work. So was it now; on the wild sons of the desert no missionaries had made an impression; their rough hearts had given no echo to the sound of the Gospel. Something of startling novelty was needed to catch their attention and strike their imagination, and drag them violently to the cross. These wild men came from their deserts to see the weird, haggard man in his den. He fled from them as they crowded upon him, not into the wastes of sand, but up a pillar; first up one six cubits, then one twelve cubits, and finally one of thirty-six. The sons of Ishmael poured to the foot of the pillar, 'like a river along the roads, and formed an ocean of men about it. And,' says Theodoret, 'myriads of Ishmaelites, who had been enslaved in the darkness of impiety, were illuminated by that station on the column. For this most shining light, set as it were on a candlestick, sent forth all around his beams, like the sun, and one might see Iberi, Persians, and Armenians, coming and receiving Divine Baptism. But the Ishmaelites (Arabs) coming by tribes, 200 and 300 at a time, and sometimes even 1,000, denied with shouts the error of their ancestors; and breaking in pieces the images they had worshipped, and renouncing the orgies of Venus, they received the Divine Sacraments, and accepted laws from that holy tongue. And this I have seen with my own eyes, and have heard them renouncing the impiety of their fathers, and assenting to evangelic doctrine.' Here was the result. Little did the boy know, as he lay before the monastery door five days with-

Happy were they for whom he prayed, and blessed was she who bore him; for we are told by a disciple of his that after his mother's death the Saint's prayers for her were most fervent. Ever regarding himself as the vilest of sinners and the outcast of the world, his charity and sweetness to others had no limit. He was always ready to submit himself to ecclesiastical authority, and the fact that the Patriarch of Antioch and other prelates and priests were willing to mount the column in order to give him Holy Communion, shows that his manner of life was blessed by God, and approved by the Church. He died in 459, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

out eating, to what God had called him; for what work he was predestined, when he coiled the rope about his body. The Spirit had breathed, and he had followed the impulse, and now he wrought what the tongue of a prophet could not have effected. And it was worth the pain of that rope torn from his bleeding body; it was recompense for those long fastings.

> Three winters, that my soul might grow to Thee.
> I lived up there on yonder mountain side;
> My right leg chain'd into the crag. I lay
> Pent in a roofless close of ragged stones;
> Inswathed sometimes in wandering mist and twice
> Black'd with Thy branding thunder, and sometimes
> Sucking the damps for drink, and eating not.

It was worth all this, if souls could be added to the Lord, as they were, by hundreds and thousands. God's ways are not our ways. The God who needed these souls, called up the soul of Simeon to do the work. Simeon obeyed, and traversed perhaps the most awful path man has yet trod.

It is not for us to condemn a mode of life which there is no need of men to follow now. It was needed then, and he is rightly numbered with the Saints, who submitted his will to that of God, to make him an instrument for His purpose."

THE STORY OF EPHREM.

IN Nisibis, sixteen hundred years ago, lived a lad named Ephrem. He was the son of poor parents who were good Catholics and who had indeed suffered much for the Faith, for they lived in the terrible times of the Emperor Diocletian, and the wonder is that they are known only as confessors and not as martyrs.

Their son gave them much trouble. "The wrath of his high spirits is his ruin," says Ecclesiasticus. There is danger in mere high spiritedness unless it is kept in check by prayer and sacraments. In itself it is a lovable quality enough, and one that, joined to the fear of God, is likely to result in something very good. The lightheartedness of the saints is a proverb. But high spirits in conjunction with a fiery and passionate temper, and a careless, heedless disposition, is bound to bring a man into great trouble—sometimes to irretrievable ruin.

Ephrem's high spirits were of this description. Laziness opens the door to every kind of sin, and he seems to have been incurably idle. Ripe for mischief of every kind was Ephrem, for if he was sent on an errand by his parents he acted like the young man in the parable, saying, "I go, sir," though he only made a pretense of going. He had some knowledge of the Catholic Faith, but according to the custom of the age and the place his baptism had been put off.

At first sight, stone-throwing on the part of a country

boy does not seem a very serious matter, though when it is recklessly continued it may lead to very sad results. Wanton cruelty is quite another matter, and when we hear of Ephrem setting to work deliberately to stone a cow that was in calf, and continuing this until the poor beast fell dead, we feel that "Unpromising Material" is a very mild term to apply to him.

The day upon which this happened he had been sent by his parents on an errand to a neighboring town, and it was on his way out that the boy seems to have stoned the cow to death—spending hours at the task, for he drove it before him into a thick wood and it was sunset before the animal expired. During the night it was eaten by wild beasts.

Returning home the next day, Ephrem met on the road the poor man who owned the cow. Not suspecting that it was dead, but knowing something of the lad's character, the man asked him if he had driven the animal away. The only answer the poor fellow got was a torrent of abuse.

Congratulating himself upon his escape from what might have been a serious charge—for the Syrian law in regard to property was a severe one—Ephrem was again sent out of town on some business for his parents. In passing through the wood he came across some shepherds, who proved such good company that he loitered with them until nightfall. It was too late then to continue his journey, and so he stayed with them all night.

When morning came there was a great to-do. During the night the fold had been broken into and some valuable sheep carried off. That Ephrem was in league with the robbers they never doubted. They thought that he had got up in the night and shown the way to the thieves, pointing

out the best and fattest sheep. The boy protested and swore and cried, but they would not listen to him. Prison, said they, was the only place for him, and to prison they dragged him.

Now in the matter of sheep-stealing—a crime for which men in our own country were hanged not so many years ago—Ephrem was entirely innocent, and when he found himself locked up he began to cry very bitterly. There was no one to help him, no one to pity him. It was his first experience of prison life and he found it painful. Yet there was worse to follow. To lie all day on his little heap of straw with heavy irons locked on his ankles was bad enough; but what of the trial that was awaiting him? Boy as he was, he had heard much of the awful tortures that were inflicted upon prisoners in the courts of that still pagan country, of the sentences of life-long slavery, of fearful mutilation, and of terrible modes of execution. In a land that was still heathen mercy was almost unknown, and Ephrem had not the smallest reason for hoping that his tender age would be a plea for pity. He knew that boys as young as himself, even younger, had been condemned to die on the gibbet for breaking the laws of their country; that some indeed had suffered the fearful death of crucifixion.

The boy was not alone in his gloomy prison. Two men awaiting trial lay in chains in the same vault as himself. Both were accused of serious crimes, and both declared that they were innocent. This struck Ephrem as being very curious, and he began to think about it a good deal. Of the crime with which he was charged he knew himself to be innocent: was it possible that his fellow-prisoners were equally guiltless?

One night he dreamed a dream. He thought that some very noble-looking person came to his side and said to him: "Ephrem, why are you in prison?" At once the boy began to declare his innocence. "Yes," said the shining figure, "you are innocent of the crime of which you are accused: but what of the poor man's cow that you drove to its death? Be quite sure that no one suffers without reason. And as a proof of this, when morning comes listen to the talk of your fellow-prisoners."

On the following day the two men spoke together, and one of them who was charged with murder said to the other: "I declare that I am not guilty of taking away the life of a fellow-creature; but I will tell you of a vile thing I did only the other day. As I was passing over a bridge I came upon two men quarrelling. One of them at last took hold of the other and threw him into the river. Now if I had tried I believe I could have saved that man; unhappily I did not, and the poor fellow was drowned."

Then to the utter astonishment of the boy the other man began to make a somewhat similar confession. "I am absolutely innocent of the thing for which I am awaiting my trial: nevertheless, I have done something which is very bad. A certain neighbour of mine when he was dying left his property to be divided between his daughter and his two sons. The young men wanted everything for themselves, and they bribed me to give false evidence by which the will was upset and the poor girl deprived of her share."

Nearly six weeks went by before Ephrem and his two companions were brought up for trial. The men were tried first, but the boy-prisoner was in court during the whole time. Neither of the men would confess—were they not

both innocent?—and, to the lad's great horror, the rack was brought in, the men were stripped and fastened to it hand and foot. An awful terror came upon the boy as he saw his fellow-prisoners stretched out upon this instrument of torture, and his cries filled the hall. But the officers of the court and the people who were standing about were merely amused by his evident fright, and gave him the coldest of all cold comfort.

"What are you crying for, my lad?" they asked him. "It is of no use howling now. You should have thought of the rack before you stole the sheep. You are bound to get a taste of it very soon."

The boy was really half-dead with the anticipation of the torture that was before him, and it seems probable that he swooned away from sheer fright. Happily for his companions, before their case was finished both of them were able to prove their innocence, and so they were set at liberty. But there was no time left that day for the trying of Ephrem and he was taken back to prison.

In a few days he found himself with three companions in irons, instead of the two who had been released, and curiously enough the new prisoners turned out to be the two brothers who had defrauded their sister out of her property, and the man who had thrown his enemy into the river. So with these undesirable criminals Ephrem lay in prison for another six long weeks.

A wretched time it must have been for the boy, with the terror of the torture still hanging over him, as well as the trial—at which it seemed quite possible that he would not be able to prove his innocence of the robbery. It is no wonder that he began to pray. Though still unbaptized, his

good Catholic parents—the very thought of whom was an agony to him as he lay in prison—had carefully instructed him in the Christian Faith, and, like many another poor sinner, now that he found himself in serious trouble he turned his thoughts to God. He could not but feel that there was a certain fitness in his punishment, yet the horror of the rack was, naturally enough, strongly upon him, and with all his might he prayed God to have pity.

At length the day came when the prisoners were chained together and brought to the place of trial. Again the grown-up criminals were examined first, and again that terrible rack was brought into operation. But this time the men were found guilty, and after being severely racked were sentenced to lose their right hands.

Ephrem's turn had now come. Questioned by the judge, the young prisoner declared that he was innocent. "This is the plea of every criminal," said the judge. "Here, take and strip him and fasten him on the rack." More dead than alive, the unhappy boy was stripped of his clothing and was about to have his hands and feet lashed to the wooden rollers of the rack, when a servant entered the court and told the judge that it was dinner-time, and that his meal was ready and waiting.

"Very well," replied the judge; "in that case I will try this boy some other day. Take him back to gaol."

So the lad escaped the rack this time also. In the extremity of his terror he had made a vow that if only God would deliver him from the punishment he dreaded so much, he would become a monk. Well, he had been delivered that day just in the nick of time, in a most sudden and unexpected manner. But what of the dreaded future? It seemed likely

that that awful dislocation of his young limbs had only been put off to an unknown day.

Happily for Ephrem, for this third trial he had not long to wait. It is probable that some good-hearted officer reminded the court of the length of time the boy had been in prison; at any rate the judge thought that he had been punished quite enough, and, to his intense joy, his shackles were removed and he was set at liberty.

II.

What think you did the boy Ephrem do as soon as he found himself free? Did he go back home to his parents—stoning cattle by the way and stopping to play with every shepherd-lad he met? By no means.

Everybody knows the old couplet beginning—

> The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be;

and it is certain that many promises are made to God in time of sickness or peril that are not fulfilled in seasons of health and safety; but Ephrem had taken a vow and he intended to keep it. He knew that in the mountains not far off there lived an old hermit: to this holy man he would offer himself as a novice.

It seems at first sight that for such a life no lad could have been less fitted. Probably he himself doubted very much if the hermit would accept him. However, he had made a vow, and he would do his best to fulfil it. He was not ignorant of the kind of life that he would be called upon to live: yet hard as the monastic rule might be he did not shrink from it. Hands and brain would both be fully em-

ployed and his food would be of the scantiest; but God had delivered him from prison and from torture, and Ephrem must needs prove his gratitude. The sufferings of the last three months had made him thoughtful. If an earthly prison was so gloomy, what would Hell be like? If the pain of the rack was so much to be dreaded, what of the punishment in that place of endless torment?

The saintly old man to whom he went did not refuse to receive him. In good earnest Ephrem began to engage in two of the healthiest exercises known to man, viz., prayer and work. He became a sail-maker. At the same time he began to use his head. Through no fault of his parents, his education had been neglected and he had everything to learn. But he was in earnest, and when man or boy begins to put forth the full strength of his will, and the energies a good God has given him, there is not much that he cannot do.

Certainly Ephrem did wonders. There was that bad temper of his to control and to subdue, and like the sensible fellow he was he began with that.

The notable thing about this lad was his great earnestness. God had been good to him: Ephrem was bent upon proving his gratitude. Sorrow for sin became his chief exercise. He was determined to repair the past. But he had not withdrawn himself from the world in order to lead an idle life. Brain and hand were now fully occupied, and he was earning the bread he ate. In this way he bade farewell to idleness for evermore. For the rest, had he not put himself under the obedience of a holy and experienced Abbot? And is not everything possible to the obedient?

No boy, no man becomes a saint in a day. Naturally bad-

tempered, he had to struggle hard with his irritability and ill-humor: the point is that he did struggle, and that every such struggle, however unsuccessful it might seem to be, was a victory. Once after he had fasted for several days and was just going to sit down to a mess of herb pottage, the Brother who was carrying the bowl let it fall. "Well," said Ephrem cheerfully to the rueful-looking monk, "if the pot won't come to me, I must go to it." So he took his seat on the floor and picked up what he could from the broken basin.

Ephrem's baptism made him a new creature. The past was forgiven; the sins of his youth were washed away. Grace was offered to him, and he accepted it fervently and thankfully—used it determinedly and assiduously. Henceforth he was all for God. His was no half conversion. Applying himself to manual labor, and at the same time exercising his memory by learning the whole of the Psalter, he gave himself generously to the duties of his vocation. It was soon discovered that his abilities were of a high order, and his Superiors encouraged him in the study of philosophy and theology.

III.

After long preparation Ephrem obtained leave to go to Edessa in order to hold conference with certain holy hermits who lived in the mountains close to that city, and here he remained. Receiving the Holy Order of deacon he began to preach, and his incredible fervour and zeal bore immense fruit. He who in his own life was such a wonderful example of penitence won from God the great gift of touching the hearts of sinners, and numerous were the souls that he brought to Christ. "He was possessed of an extraordinary

faculty of natural eloquence. Words flowed from him like a torrent, which yet were too slow for the impetuosity and multitude of thoughts with which he was overwhelmed in speaking on spiritual subjects. His conceptions were always clear, his diction pure and agreeable. He spoke with admirable perspicuity, copiousness, and sententiousness, in an easy unaffected style: and with so much sweetness, so pathetic a vehemence, so natural an accent, and so strong emotions of his own heart, that his words seemed to carry with them an irresistible power."

But he did not confine himself to preaching. To the glory of God and for the good of souls he began to use his pen. Though ignorant of Greek, he was a perfect master of Syriac, and in this language he wrote what may almost be described as a library of ascetical and theological books. Heaven had endowed him with the great gift of poetry, and this he used with the utmost skill to increase the knowledge and love of the Redeemer. Wonderful is the beauty and sweetness of his poems on the Nativity of our Lord and on the mysteries of religion, and perhaps no poet has ever written more eloquently or more worthily than Ephrem on the dignity and holiness of our Blessed Lady. Some of the heretics of his time, the Manichees, the Millenarians, and the Marionites, had spread their errors by means of songs and hymns; for these Ephrem substituted many beautiful compositions of his own—to the great spiritual gain of the people of Edessa.

If the life of St. Ephrem—for Saint we must now call him—were not so well authenticated, and if so many of his writings were not in evidence, we might indeed hesitate to believe that the more than unpromising material of his boy-

hood could have been moulded to the shape of a Doctor and a Father of the Catholic Church, and of one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life in the fourth century. It is true that the early life of this Saint is told in different ways by different authors, and this is easily accounted for. Ephrem himself frequently related the story of it to his monks and, as often happens in such cases, in writing it down they were not all equally accurate. Even the erudite Alban Butler gives a version which, in some of its items, does not tally with the more detailed and critical work of the Bollandists. Indeed it seems as though Father Butler thought that St. Ephrem exaggerated the wildness and sinfulness of his youth; though this learned hagiologist admits the stone-throwing episode, the false accusation of sheep-stealing, and the boy's subsequent imprisonment and trial.

But from the long and copious records of the *Acta Sanctorum* it is clear enough that whatever many other men may have been, Ephrem the Syrian was not a Saint from his cradle. He may not have been a monster of iniquity, but it is certain enough that he gave no promise of sanctity. Probably indeed of all the boys in his neighbourhood he was the least likely to distinguish himself, either for learning or holiness. In short he is a marvellous example of a sinner who sincerely repents, asks for, receives, and *uses* the grace that God is always ready to give to those who really seek it. More than that, he is an example of one who in the beginning turned to our Lord from the motive of fear. It was sheer fright, the abject terror of the rack, that first made Ephrem cry mightily to Heaven. So there was nothing very noble, nothing in any way heroic, in the beginning of this wonderful change of life. Happily, that which be-

gan in fear was continued in contrition, and ended in love. His deep sorrow for sin made him very dear to God. His soul was that of a true penitent, of one who walks humbly and proceeds cautiously, who has no trust in himself but an unbounded confidence in God.

In the beginning of his conversion, probably the last thing he thought of was that he would ever be able to minister to others. It seems almost certain that his humility prevented him from receiving the priesthood, and that like St. Benedict and St. Francis he remained a deacon to the end of his life. He loved solitude, and after a term of preaching would retire into the desert to refresh his own soul with prayer and meditation. Yet he was always at the call of duty, and showed his readiness to benefit the bodies of the people as well as their souls. Once when the city of Edessa was severely visited by famine St. Ephrem boldly rebuked the callousness of the rich for allowing the poor to die unsuccoured. "Your wealth will be your damnation," he said to those who were heedless of their obligation in performing works of mercy. Frightened and ashamed, they pretended that there was no one to whom they could entrust the proper distribution of their alms. "Then give me that office," said the Saint. As soon as he had received sufficient money, old as he was at the time he fitted up no less than three hundred beds in the public hospitals and began to tend the sick and the starving with his own hands. It was the last public undertaking of his long and useful life. It was as though the good God had kept him alive until the cessation of the famine, for when his services were no longer needed he returned to his cell and died after a few days' sickness.

At the time of his death, which took place about the year

378, St. Ephrem had reached a very advanced age, but the date of his birth is not known. Ancient writers tell us that he was very tall, and that his countenance was singularly sweet and beautiful. In his old age he stooped considerably, and though his eyes were often swimming with tears his features were wonderfully calm and serene. His devotion to the adorable Sacrament was very great, and among the last words that he wrote we find the following: "Entering upon so long and dangerous a journey I have my Viaticum, even Thee, O Son of God. In my extreme spiritual hunger I will feed on Thee, the Repairer of Mankind. So it shall be that no fire will dare to approach me: for it will not be able to bear the sweet saving odour of Thy Body and Blood."

With his last breath he preached, and the entire population of the city crowded to the door of his cell. Forbidding every kind of funeral pomp, he again and again begged prayers for the repose of his soul: then turning to God in silent prayer, he gently passed away.

THE BISHOP'S DINNER.

RIGOBERT from his country cell
Obeyed the big cathedral bell:
Bishop of Rheims, and monk, was he,
Famed for his blithesome sanctity.

Walking slowly as he was wont,
His server-laddie marching in front,
Returning home through street and square
The Saint recited his office-prayer.

A rich man met him and thus did say:
"My Lord, pray dine with me to-day;
Dinner is ready, the board is spread—
Come in and bless our daily bread."

"To-day I may not dine with you:
For Holy Mass I am overdue,"
Smiled the good man, "I must hasten back,
For as yet the Bread of Heaven I lack."

"Then if with me you may not dine,
You shall have at home a dinner fine;
A client has brought yon big fat goose—
Here, lad, take this! and don't let it loose!"

Struggled the boy with the cumbrous bird,
Tightened his arm the goose to gird;

Then "Ho!" he wailed and "Well-a-day!"—
For the cackling monster had flown away.

Loud was the cry of the server-child,
Soft was the voice of the Bishop mild;
To console the lad his only care
Till he resumed his morning prayer.

Presently every passer-by
Saw a big bird high up in the sky,
Saw a great goose come fluttering down
Over the roofs of the ancient town.

Soon o'er Rigobert's holy head
Hovered the goose that lately fled:
Soon it lay in the city street
Prone at Rigobert's saintly feet.

Then the boy with a gladsome cry
Re-captured the monster eagerly:
Brought it safely to Gernicour,
Right to the Bishop's very door.

But not for the spit was that goose designed;
On it the old Saint never dined;
To the people's joy and wonderment
It followed him whithersoever he went.

That bird became the good man's pet,
And for aught I know it is living yet:
What is certain and sure is this—
As long as it lived it lived in bliss.

ST. WULSTAN AND THE CHORISTER.

ALL sweetly sang the quiring boys
Walking in Wulstan's holy train:
They sang of high unearthly joys
Where Saints unnumbered reign.

"All things shall fade, and time shall cease,
But Heaven remains when life is past;
Only the things that make for peace,
Eternal peace, can last."

As to himself the Bishop talked
And murmured, "Heavenly joys abide!"—
A sunny, gold-haired choir-lad walked
Close to the prelate's side.

"Yea, *these* shall fall," St. Wulstan said
Stroking the curls so thick, so fair:
"One day, my child, upon thy head
Shall not be found a hair."

The boy looked up with troubled mien:
"Oh, Father, must I lose them all?"—
Tears gathered in his quiv'ring een—
"Pray that they may not fall!"

The Bishop's smile was kind and sweet,
  His glance was pitiful and mild;
An inward prayer he did repeat,
  Blessing the singing-child.

"While Wulstan lives, my little son,
  You shall not lose your curly shock;
From off this head shall fall not one
  Soft silky-golden lock."

Years fled (so old-time writers tell):
  True was the thing that Wulstan said;
From the grown man not one hair fell—
  Until the Saint was dead.

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